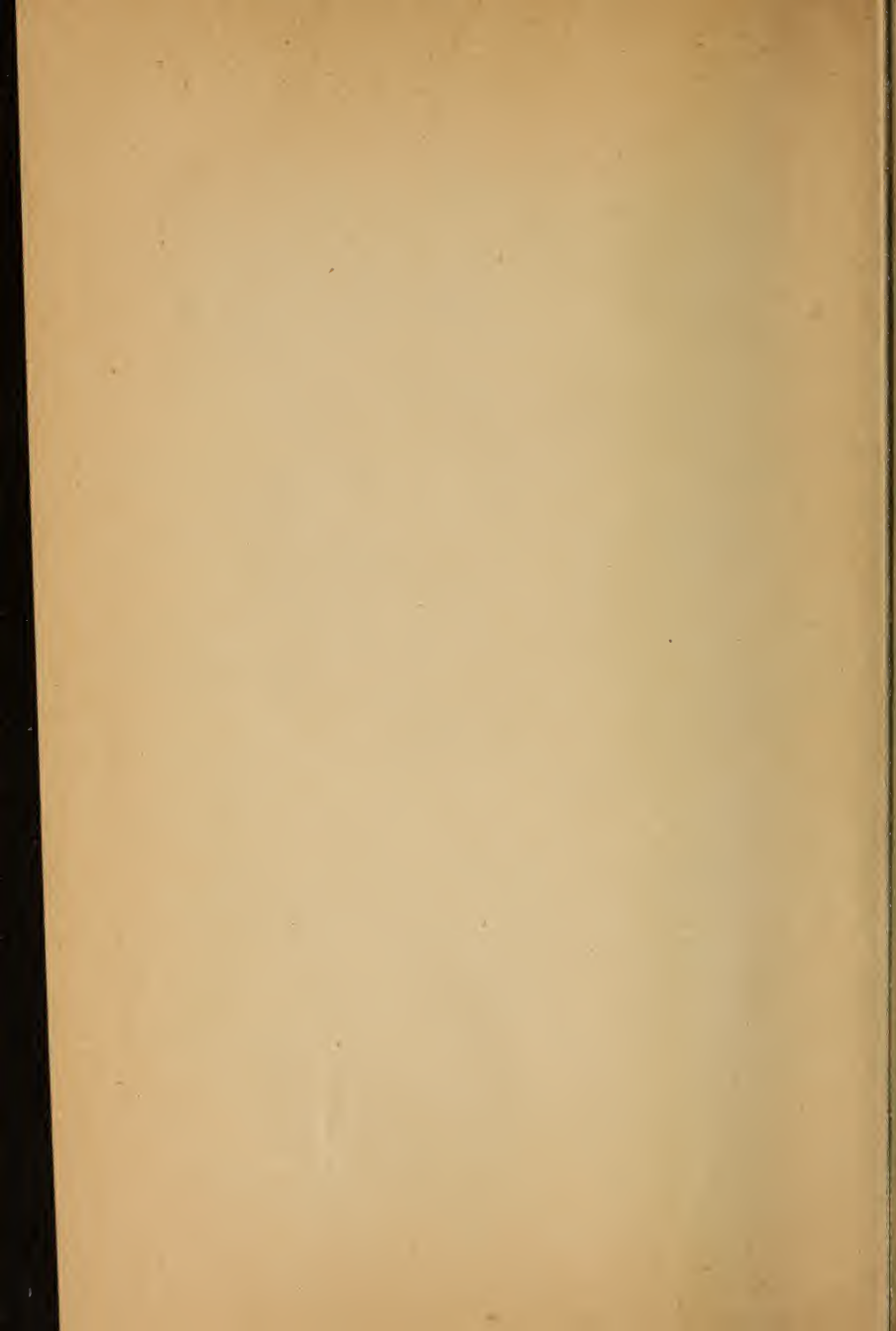


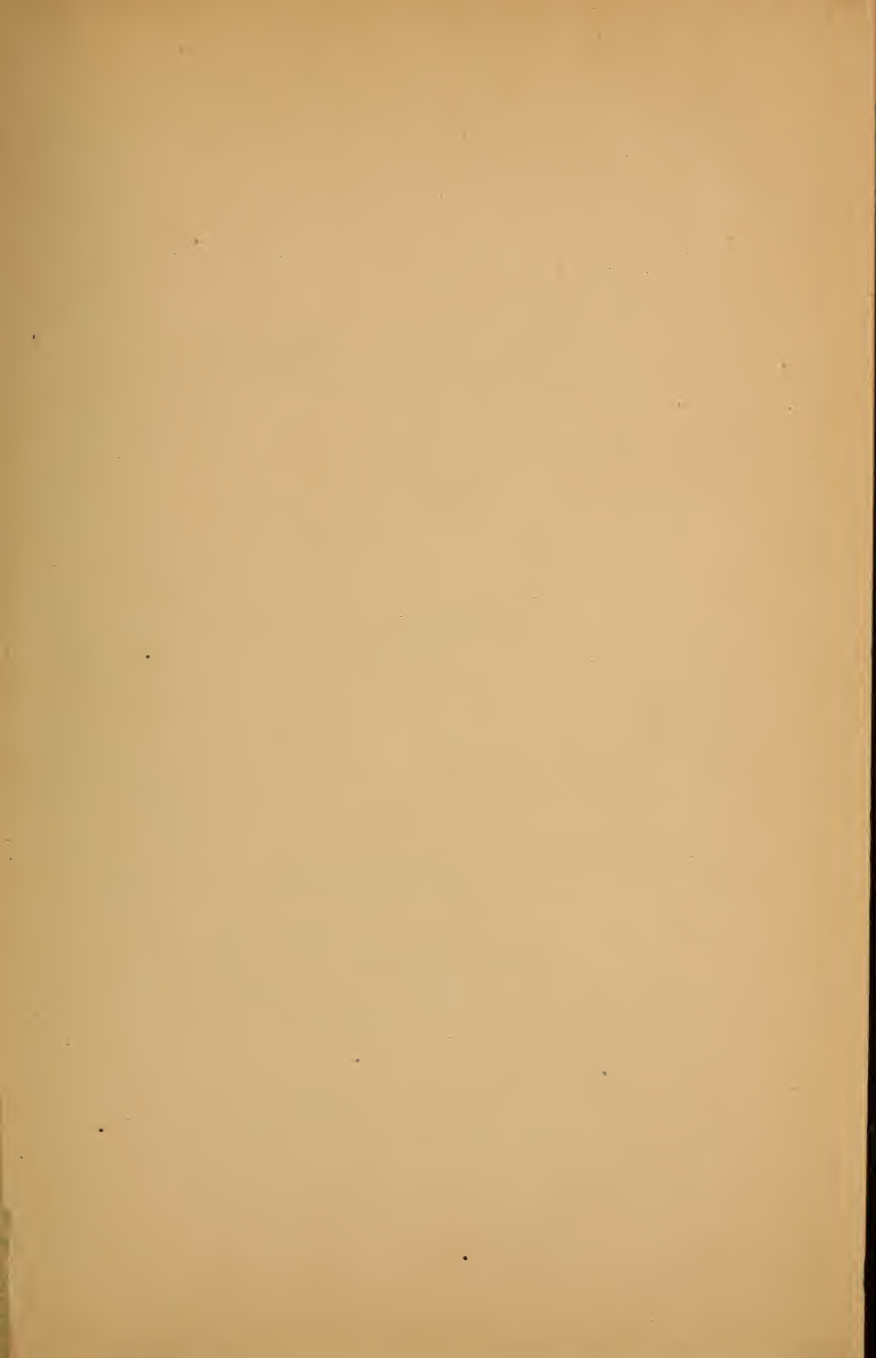
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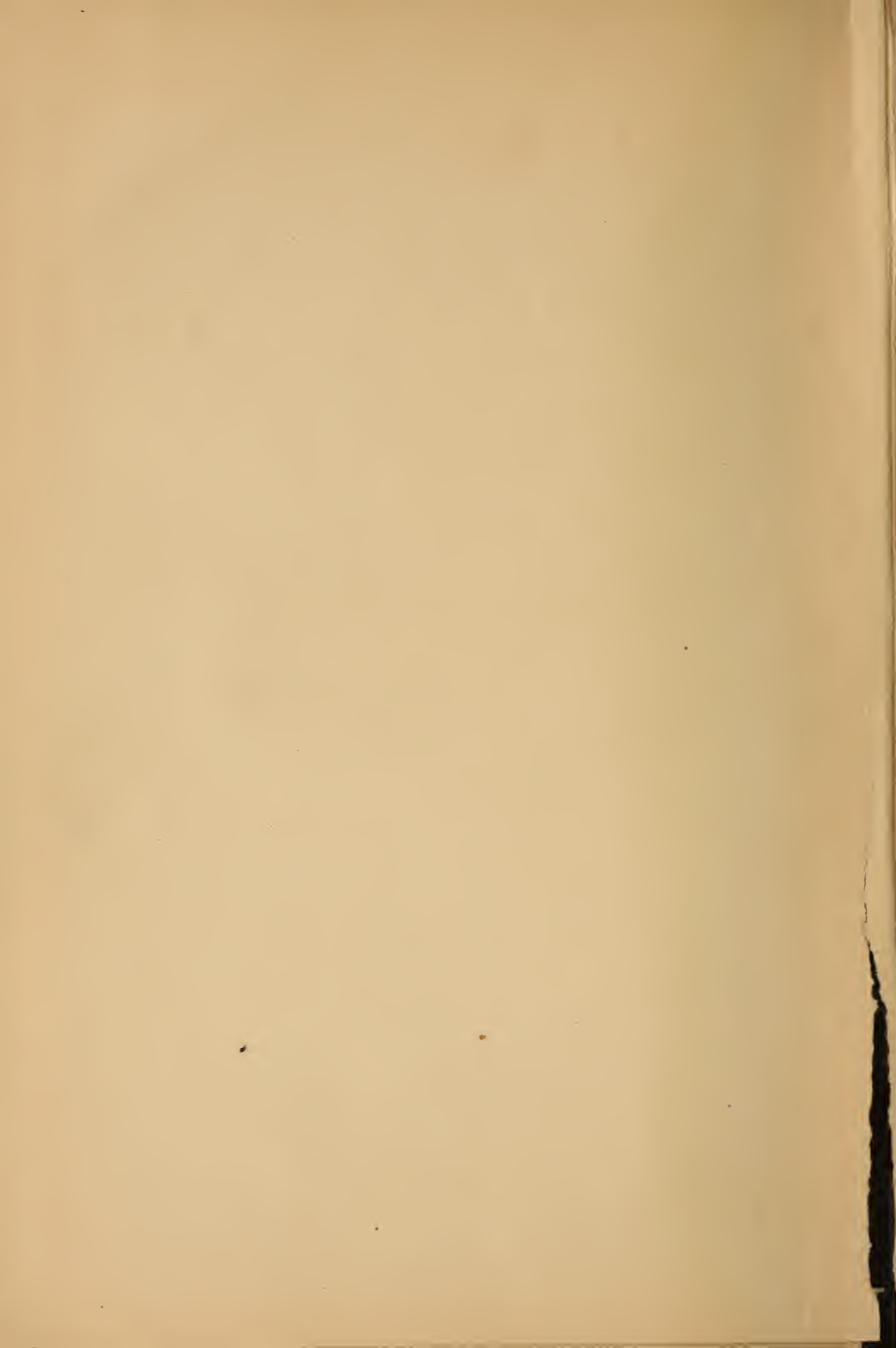
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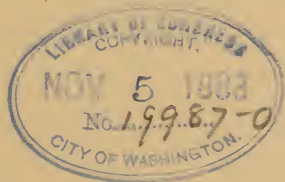
THE

ANTIDOTE OF DOUBT.

BY

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PREFACE.

THE substance of this little volume was contained in a series of lectures delivered by me some years since in the General Theological Seminary at New York. Several requests for their publication reached me at that time, but I preferred to wait until I could find time to rewrite, and somewhat rearrange the argument. Only recently has the pressure of episcopal duty been so far lifted as to afford me, in part at least, the coveted opportunity. Had more time been allowed me, I would have sought to elaborate points which, as I am painfully conscious, have received inadequate treatment.

In a certain sense, the argument may be regarded as a restatement of the Vincentian Canon. But the reader will at once perceive that it leads the mind to higher sources than those to which St. Vincent pointed. He was content to rest his canon upon the "views" of "the holy elders and fathers," and "the definitions and opinions of all, or at least almost all the priests and doctors together." But, deeply as we venerate the words of those who have, from age to age, borne witness to the Catholic Faith, and, with as much warmth of devotion as brilliancy of learning, taught and defended its sublime truths, it is more edifying to the believer, as it must prove more satisfactory to those who are harassed with doubt, to be directed to the office-work of the Holy Ghost as the supernatural source of that "universal consent" which is the criterion of the truth.

In a time of relaxed faith such as this, when among clergy and laity there is a deplorable tendency to substitute nebulous opinions or mere sentiments in the place of the enduring and substantial system of dogma which the Church has always held, those who love clear-cut truth as it stands attested by the consensus of the Body of Christ, will not withhold their prayers that even so humble an effort as this to show that there is a basis of certitude for faith to stand upon, may be blessed to the rescue of some souls from the paralyzing influence of doubt.

CATHEDRAL OF SS. PETER AND PAUL, }
Chicago, Ill., *October*, 1883. }

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CATHOLIC DOGMA

THE

ANTIDOTE OF DOUBT.

CHAPTER I.

THE PARALYSIS OF FAITH AND ITS CAUSES.

THERE is something morally magnificent in the portraiture of Saint Paul as he stands before us pictured by his own pen in the second epistle to Timothy. Undaunted by suffering, unmoved by the reproach of the Gospel, he exclaims with a tone of triumphant certitude, "I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."¹ There is neither protest nor peradventure here. Every high quality of his soul is summoned to a supreme act of faith, and responds with such joyful distinctness that there is a sound as of chimes well tuned and harmonious. Notice, too, how he addresses himself to the Personality of that Lord Who found him ready to perish in the wilderness of Pharisaism and led him to the waters that poured from the smitten rock of truth, "I know *Whom* I have believed," "And that Rock was Christ."² Nor can one fail to observe, in passing, the significant connection between an enthusiastic faith in the personal Christ and strong alle-

¹ 2 Tim. i. 12.

² 1 Cor. x. 4.

giance to fixed formularies of the truth, when the Apostle, with his next breath, exclaims to his beloved son Timothy, "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."¹

That quaint but strong Scotch saint, Samuel Rutherford, furnishes another illustration of the power of a faith that rises to the height of assurance. "Our hope," he exclaims, "is not hung upon such untwisted thread as 'I imagine so,' or, 'It is likely;,' but the cable, the strong rope of our fastened anchor, is the oath and promise of Him Who is eternal verity; our salvation is fastened with God's Own hand and Christ's Own strength to the strong stake of God's unchanging nature."²

The spiritual beauty of such a faith as this, resting calmly on the rock of certitude, is very fascinating. It wears that peculiar air of dignity and native strength which challenges the admiration of eyes that can discern the loftier elements of human character. It suggests the presence of that rugged type of devotion which does not make any account of the martyr's fate, and which seems by comparison with the less positive kinds of loyalty to truth to refuse them any place in the census of human heroism. There is vastly more of this undoubting confidence in the truth of our holy religion than the superficial observer would conjecture. There is a constituency of faithful souls

¹ 2 Timothy i. 13. "The words of St. Paul to Timothy, which are found in his second letter, introducing the command 'keep the deposit,' seem most clearly to direct his pupil to prepare such a formula, if he had not one already in hand. 'Have (or draw up) a sketch of the wholesome words which thou heardest from me in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.' The words are *ὑποτύπωσιν ἔχει ὑγιαίνοντων λόγων*. *Formam habe sanorum verborum*."—Dictionary of Christian Biography, William Smith, D.D., art. "Creeds," Vol. I., p. 696.

² Letters of Samuel Rutherford.

among the high and the low, the wise and the uneducated, who make no effort to give voice to their convictions except to the ear of Him Who hears all. But it must be acknowledged that, beautiful as this serene trust in Christianity as the final expression of moral truth is, there are many among us who, while they admit it, cannot participate in it, because they are haunted by doubts concerning the things which are most surely believed among us. They constitute a class for whose restoration to robust faith particular efforts should be put forth, and to whom, possibly, a recital of the means by which others, once in like sad plight, escaped the bondage of doubt and regained their liberty in Christ may, by God's added blessing, enable them to know the certainty of those things wherein they have been instructed. There are many avenues to the truth. Indeed, it may be said that all roads would lead to Christ, if those who traverse them were wise travelers. And it is much to be desired that every avenue shall be pointed out and made plain, to the intent that all may be allured to the truth of God. Our present purpose is to attempt to throw some light on one path which has conducted souls to a sense of fixed and final confidence in the truth.

A sincere man, doubting but not desiring to doubt, will feel that it has not been altogether a strong and noble thing to permit the access of doubt through tame submission to exterior conditions, and will recognize it as a primary obligation that he shall not wholly surrender his faith without first engaging in a manly struggle to regain strength of conviction. He is breathing the atmosphere of a world-wide religious battle-field. The force of faith is at this juncture minished among men. But it is not honest treatment the truth gets when men easily reject it because others despise it. Nay more, he who penetrates a region where the air is charged with malaria, which robs manhood

of its virile strength and turns the rose upon woman's cheek to ashes, is under compulsion of nature's first law to prepare himself for the encounter, and then to resist by every practicable means the assault of the deadly foe. To rush into the decomposing morasses as he would climb to the crystalline purity of Alpine airs, would be to court the fate he almost deserved. But the efforts of a person who honestly resists doubt must not only be of pure intention : they must have intelligent direction. It is our belief that many of those who constitute this class of irresolute minds have suffered the paralysis of faith in consequence of the particular condition of things characterizing our own age, to which we have already referred. Now if this be the case, it would be as unwise as it would be dangerous for them to decline a careful study of the religious characteristics of the age, and, particularly, to scrutinize them in the light of preceding epochs of history ; for the ages interpret each other, as they also reproduce each other.

History has many hidden meanings, and it requires a mind that has been appropriately cultivated to detect these more subtle lessons ; but there are facts which, as well as the principles that control them, are patent to every intelligent eye.

An ordinary survey of the religious history of mankind, during the period that has elapsed since the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ, reveals very distinctly the fact that the Faith which was once delivered to the saints,¹ has moved forward along a line of alternating elevations and depressions. An age in which the believing spirit dominated ever seemed to generate a critical age, which was followed by scholarly and then popular unbelief. But the sceptical spirit was itself subject to this process of reaction, and prepared the way for an age of faith.

¹ St. Jude 3. *Ἀπαξ* = once for all ; *semel pro semper*.

These alternations do not imply any defect in the truth as a revelation of the mind and will of God ; for Christian truth, if it has any claim to the title, must consist of definite ideas, essential, abiding, and universal, whether they are formulated or unexpressed, nor can it at any time be less than the truth. But when we contemplate the organs of perception in man, we plainly discover that in its relation to human thought the truth may be less distinctly apprehended, or, in its control of the will, less loyally acknowledged.

It were folly to ignore the imperfections of our nature. There is in us a centrifugal tendency which we dare not fail to take into account. Other tendencies constantly resist it, ordinarily restrain it, and often neutralize it, so as to turn the governing motives of life in an opposite and nobler direction ; but in many it is only a resisted and not a conquered tendency. So strong a bias against those higher aspirations after God which also exist within us, must leave its impression upon the mind, and does in great measure account for those alternations of belief and unbelief which the chronicles of religion record.

Thus the human mind has seldom been able for a long period to retain a perfect equipoise of reason and faith. Liberty has ever exhibited a tendency to lawlessness, while authority easily degenerated into tyranny. Faith became credulity and lapsed into superstition. The violence done to faith was laid at faith's door, while our poorly-balanced nature, which seldom uses God's gifts without abusing them, was really responsible for the result. As natural as the oscillation of the pendulum from one extremity of its arc to the other, is the reaction of the mind from superstition to scepticism. It is a difficult task for those who are inspired by the passions of the contest to reach accurate judgments as to what should be surrendered and what should be accepted ; but when a calmer spirit dawns it

becomes evident that in proportion as the reaction from error was too radical, the reaction to error was more striking, and the passion to destroy error became a stronger motive than the ambition to conserve truth. A blind faith will sooner or later go to reason for eyesight; but the result will be one which dazzles rather than guides, and the mind will linger in the cold light only until the hunger of the soul for God sets in, and he who doubted the truth begins to doubt his doubt, while he who lost faith in God loses faith in his unbelief, and turns back affrighted to cast himself prostrate before the altar he was ready to demolish.

But, in addition to such causes as are discovered to exist in the defects of our nature, there are reasons incidental to the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ why its progress should be characterized by alternating conditions like those of a sternly contested battle-field. There is an essential enmity between truth and error. Our Lord indicated this when He said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword."¹ Christianity is distinctly a supernatural religion, and as such projects itself into the sphere of the natural man, who receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him;² and it proposes its best benefits only to those who willingly receive the supernatural gift of spiritual discernment. Its message to the world is predicated upon the theory, which it deems a palpable fact, that the world is a fallen world, and that it does not possess the power of self-recuperation. It proposes to those who think they are whole and need not a physician remedies which demand the confession that the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint; and it chooses its own terms in exhibiting these remedies. Towards the *pseudo* revelations and the false religions (some

¹ St. Matthew x. 34.

² I Corinthians ii. 14.

of them organized and aggressive), which enjoy the allegiance of millions, the more sturdy to assert their claims and the more difficult to contend with, because their errors are subtly intermingled with truth, it must present an attitude of antagonism. Still less must it surrender to distortions and perversions of its own characteristic truths, and suffer the vain imaginations of the religious astrologer to stand for the pure science of heaven.

Such are some of the causes which contribute to make the hold which God's truth gains upon the minds of men a variable force.

When an individual, who has felt this sense of uncertainty in regard to truths once firmly believed, realizes that the age in which he lives is characterized by great unbelief, with much attendant irresolution of belief, there is presented to his mind the strongest possible argument for intelligent self-scrutiny and heroic resistance of untoward influences.

But the benefit which he is likely to experience will be largely increased as he shall proceed to trace out any special causes which may have operated to produce this period of depressed faith and menacing arrogance of unbelief.

It does not require a very profound study of the history of our times to discover that the present condition of the world of religious thought is the cumulative result of a series of fierce assaults, without parallel in their force and subtilty, which Christianity has sustained during the past one hundred years or more. Although every assailant has been met, breast to breast, by a *defensor fidei*, serious consequences have ensued.

First (to go back no further), came the cold naturalism of the English deists, which still exercises a malign influence, though their names are almost forgotten. The

atheistic spirit of the first French Revolution is not yet an exploded force : it survives in tendencies which are easily detected in our own as well as in other lands. The scholarly rationalism of Germany, succeeded, as it was, by a harvest of popular unbelief, is likely to repeat its history on these shores. Positivism, which deified collective humanity, and knew no life beyond the tomb, prepared the way for that agnostic blindness to which everything but physical phenomena is unknowable, and for religion presents us a sordid materialism in which selfishness is duty, science is providence, and secular success is heaven. The consequences of these assaults upon the faith are manifest. In literature scepticism is insinuating and plausible, putting poetry, history, fiction, and philosophy under tribute. In education, bold beyond parallel, it inspires thousands of the student class with its sneering spirit, and manipulates the public school system, it is to be feared, as the engine of its zeal. In the public press it is a moral pestilence. It seeks to commend itself to popular favor by identifying itself with popular causes. It has even effected an entrance into pulpits and attacks religion in the name of Him Whom it seeks to dethrone. The sceptical wing of the scientific class sneer at the idea of "forcing the generous wine of science into the old bottles of Judaism," and have succeeded, by dint of imaginative generalizations from incomplete data, in creating among unthinking people the impression that the foundations of the faith have been undermined. The thunder of battle is also heard in the direction of metaphysics, and pompous philosophies announce their intention to sweep the old religion from the earth.

In such a state of things, in which the sceptical spirit pervades the air like a miasmatic vapor, few are able to resist its influence entirely, although its effects are by no

means uniform in degree. It is a long way from a state of dubiety with respect to some particular aspect of the truth, to the vulgar and ruthless hostility of an atheist like Jaccotot.

Perhaps we might deem unbelief to be illustrated in nature by the evening sky, which is at first only less bright than the sun that has disappeared, but which declines through many a waning hue, and is shaded off at last into black night. Doubt is the first faint shadow of the gathering gloom.

CHAPTER II.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF ALL UNBELIEF.

IT will be found profitable to subject the sceptical tendencies of our time to a somewhat more searching analysis. It is well to know the circumstances of their historic rise and development, well to appreciate their pervasive influence, well to recognize the injuries which the cause of truth has suffered in this world-wide conflict; but it is also well to scrutinize them if haply we may ascertain whether there exists between them some bond of affiliation or underlying principle common to all. We may characterize these tendencies as a subtle influence pervading the world of thought; but the doubting mind will desire a more specific description of the miasm.

Scepticism has its peculiar methods of exploration within the realm of truth, sees with peculiar obliquity of vision the phenomena that present themselves there, and reaches conclusions which correspond with its peculiar processes of induction. In one word, it represents an abnormal and diseased condition of man's interior nature, and its characteristic symptom, as well as fatal defect, consists in its failure to conserve unison of aim and concordance of action between those faculties of man's nature by which it is designed that he shall perceive and embrace the truth; and this vicious method coming to be adopted by some who have possessed strength and reasonableness of faith, produces painful if not disastrous results. I do not mean to say that the masses of Christian people perceive and em-

brace the truth of their religion through their using a faultless method of demonstration, with formal arguments and trains of proofs that are irresistible. "A sailor who takes the moon's age and the hour of high water from his almanac with no knowledge of the theory of the tides or of the moon's orbit, is as well off for practical purposes as the astronomer who calculated the tables."¹ Moreover, there are pathways to conviction which the mind traverses without consciously consecutive steps of progress, knowing only that the terminus of faith has been reached. Many persons also believe on the faith of others, and when they fall into doubtfulness it is because others doubt, just precisely as most of the popular scepticism is not loss of faith in God, but loss of faith in the faith of others. Still it is largely true that much of the uncertainty and irresolution which exists among those who have not consciously surrendered faith is traceable to the fundamental defect of all unbelief with respect to the symmetrical use of the faculties.

Truth exists and it must be cognizable. Coming from the Infinite Mind, it is addressed to man as a being presumed to be endowed with faculties by which he may both perceive and embrace it. But it is pertinent to inquire as to the proper signification of the term.

Are these faculties distinct centers of cognition included within our complex nature—separate jurisdictions ruled by independent powers or qualities of the mind? Or, are they simply different states or aspects of a nature whose primary and distinguishing peculiarity is its *unity*, the states or aspects of which we separate and classify only for convenience of expression? An individual may at a given period be influenced by the predominance of a particular side of his nature, as, for example, he may now be pre-

¹ Conder, *The Basis of Faith*, p. 135.

dominantly swayed by his affections, again by his discursive powers, or, still again, by his determinative capacity; but in none of these instances, nor in any others that are conceivable, does he so entirely surrender to any particular predominance as to be emancipated from the influence of the other faculties. Indeed, it would prove impracticable for the intelligence to act without the concurrence of the will, or the will without the intellect; nor will the coldest process of ratiocination be long untouched by some gleam of feeling. We are essentially one, and the differentia of our nature suggest only various characteristics of our unity. This law of our being, which is also a fact of our consciousness, cannot be ignored by us without incurring penalties of a serious kind; and yet nothing is more frequent among thinkers than this unreal way of contemplating man, as though each mind were composed of several distinct entities, as an aviary contains many species of birds. In point of fact, the mind is one and only in its manifestations other than one, and it is to this unity that the messages of truth which emanate from the Divine Mind are addressed.

If, now, we desire to illustrate the baleful effects of this error, we do not need to journey far to find a person who is willing to admit the testimony only of his sense perceptions in his endeavor to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. He has made of himself a Polyphemus, his one eye incapable of seeing in material nature

“ The thin veil
Which half conceals and half reveals the face
And lineaments of our King.”

It is this Polyphemus who cannot see soul anywhere in the universe, to whom thought and will are no more than functions of the brain, and love, wit, and imagination due only to superior cerebral organization, whose sole law is neces-

sity, the *morale* of whose existence is "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." As a mere speculation, materialism would have little influence; but it is a theory which ministers to some of the strongest though lowest tendencies of our nature, and hence it has its prophets among thinkers thinking falsely, and its devotees among the besotted crowds to whom pleasure and pelf are life's strong aim and best reward.

Truth does not employ coercive measures, and therefore men who do not use the eyes of the soul will not be forced to perceive it. God reveals Himself to man as to one entity; and, therefore, as much to him feeling as to him reasoning. What is usually termed the moral faculty is simply that state of the soul in which it is predominantly engaged in viewing the side of things that involves obligation, the oughtness of things; not as though this moral activity excluded, but rather as it includes all other possible activities of the soul. It is when thus occupied that the soul looks out upon the spiritual world and learns to discern the nobler world which is above the plane of sense, to exercise reverence toward the Infinite, and to appreciate all that is pure, elevating, and good. There is, indeed, a danger here, as well. Precisely as if we absorb ourselves in physical science, and seek the witness only of material things, we are tempted to surrender ourselves to materialism, so this relation of the spirit to the knowledge of divine things may be indulged at the expense of other relations, so as to incur the penalty of credulity and fanaticism. But why should we, therefore, ignore the spiritual intuitions unless we also propose to deny the testimony of sensational perception? or rather, why should we be required to accredit what comes to us from the vile earth beneath us, but be asked to regard as vain and futile imaginations those golden visions of the far-seeing soul which we

behold when we stand on tiptoe and gaze off into the higher realms of being?

Moreover conscience, which is God's monogram on the soul, demands recognition, and has supreme right to join its testimony with that of consciousness to supplement the deficiencies which we feel when we confine ourselves to lower states of cognition, and to bear concurrent witness that behind the material and the phenomenal towers the awful form of absolute Being, uncaused and causing. In the perception of this testimony, the rigid uniformity of law, and the amazing complexities of phenomena only tend to elevate our conceptions of the wisdom, power, goodness, and infiniteness of that Being. Conscience is the soul seeing Right, and through that a righteous God—not a dim, dreary, nebulous something or nothing that is unknowable. Conscience will not suffer reason to conceive a possible God who has set the wheels of development in motion to produce an intelligent creature with an instinct of dependence on Him, and a native impulse of prayer to Him and a disposition to thank Him for benefits received, while He proves to be neither rod nor staff to the weary, with no ear for prayer nor heart to beat responsively to human love. A strange God that! a God who implants in us a feeling that we are in His hands not as a soulless law or an inexorable fate, but as a personal Father, able to stoop to our cries, and willing to minister to our necessities; and yet who, when we utter our prayer or lift our song, retreats to inaccessible heights, and consigns us to soulless law and inexorable fate! We cannot believe as much as that. It were less credulous to believe in the God who reveals Himself in the sacred depths of our conscience, and who meets its necessities with pardon and, after that, peace.

Passing to what is termed the rational faculty, we may,

with propriety, ask what, after all, is the ancient conflict between reason and faith but a difference about unreal distinctions in our nature? When men will reason as if they were endowed with no capacity except that of discursive thought, they must expect to suffer the penalties consequent upon violating the symmetry of their being. If reason has the sole power to find and recognize truth, why is it always in search of it, yet never finding it? why does history furnish all this dioramic display of brilliant but evanescent philosophies? why did they not give infallible deliverances in the long distant days when there was yet no Christian revelation to question their teachings? why has every effort to plant on the ruins of Christianity a logically perfect universal religion that would illustrate the impertinence of supernatural revelation miserably failed? In the time of St. Paul we read that the world by wisdom knew not God; but that world has not made any advance in divine science since, although there has been no intermission in the struggle of the speculative reason to unlock the secret chambers of knowledge. One system of philosophy after another has arisen to condemn the errors of its predecessor, but also to meet the same fate itself in due time. Admit that the Platonic and Aristotelian systems have ever lingered in close relation with Christian thought, and what does it signify except that the guesses of the Greeks were reason's closest approximation to the truth?

The mediæval contention of Anselm and Abelard still continues. Abelard tells us that only reason can know. But Anselm rejoins that faith also can know. Abelard insists that we can know only what is demonstrated to our capacity of reflective analysis, and that to believe in Anselm's sense is to take something on trust which cannot be so demonstrated; wherefore the *γνῶσις* of philosophy is worthier a rational being than the *πίστις*

of religion. But Anselm maintains that faith also can know ; and further, that reason must trust. And this is clear, since reason does not rest on itself but on its data. The characteristic feature of the rational faculty is that it builds up on inductions. There is therefore a necessity why it must trust its foundations. Indeed, all conclusions, whether of faith or reason, are built upon the authority of something antecedent to their final perception. But these states cannot be disunited without danger of error. The contention between *intellige ut credas* and *crede ut intelligas* does violence to the unity of nature. Both are true, but true only when they are complementary each of the other. "We will leave them their belief, if they will leave us our philosophy," said Strauss. But what God hath joined together let no man put asunder ; and, for that matter, who designated the philosophy of Strauss or of any other thinker to represent the rational powers of man and speak the final word concerning all truth, not excluding those higher truths of the spirit about which reason never could have positively known had not the moral powers certified their existence ?

But on the other hand it would be folly to refuse reason her rights in the soul. Not as supreme arbiter and judge but as a co-ordinate authority, she will ever exercise a powerful influence in the perception of truth ; and if the heart (which, it has been pithily said, has reasons which reason does not know), tends to exaggerated activity, so falling into mystic dreams or fanatic fervors ; or, if the conscience pushes its authority until morbid pharisaism sets in, it is fortunate that reason is at hand to assert her neutralizing influence and maintain the equipoise which lends dignity and nobleness to our nature ; but never so to assert herself as to rob the heart of that deep joy which St. Augustine felt when he wrote in his Confessions, "in

Cicero, and Plato, and other such writers, I meet with many things acutely said, and things that awaken some fervor and desire, but in none of them do I find these words, 'Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'"¹

It has been pointed out how each sense affords a distinct, and, so far as it reaches, a complete point of contact with the external world, and is yet unable to convey to the mind a report of all the properties of an object. The ear cannot detect a color nor the eye a sound. This is nature's parable of a deeper truth in religion, the more general perception of which would put an effectual quietus upon much of the seeming wisdom of those who in trying to ascertain religious truth are guilty of the absurdity of attempting to hear light or motion, or smell sound, and because they cannot accomplish the impracticable, gravely announce that light, motion and sound do not exist, or, at least, are unknowable.

Bishop Butler, speaking of the evidence of Christianity as coming from many sources yet constituting one argument, compares the conviction it enforces to the *general effect* which a vast architectural pile impresses upon the beholder. If all the details which go to make up the totality of evidence have the power of producing this unity of impression, it must be that all the aspects of our nature, all the means by which we are capable of perceiving truth, shall co-operate harmoniously in the act of perception.

This contempt for symmetry and proportion, so far as it characterizes the perception of truth, must exercise an unhealthy influence upon the tone of faith among those who believe. Coming into contact with the philosophy of sensational consciousness, the Christian is tempted to doubt the existence and spirituality of God and the reality of his

¹ Confessions, vii.

own soul; the intuitional philosophy pushed beyond its proper limits tempts him to doubt outward evidences and authorities; while the rationalistic spirit prepares him to doubt what he cannot demonstrate by intellectual processes. Thus truths which are designed to certify themselves to the whole nature become clouded and indistinct, and the soul grows weary and nervous, or seeks refuge in the scepticism of Pyrrho, to whom nothing was true, nothing false, everything uncertain except that it was possibly well to be virtuous. There is no safety except in the co-ordinate exercise of all our powers. There will be discord and not harmony unless all the strings of the harp are in tune.

CHAPTER III.

A VOICE OF AUTHORITY THE SUPREME NECESSITY.

WHILE we have sought to show that there must be a real and simultaneous co-operation of what are usually termed the faculties of cognition, in the use of which we may arrive at a knowledge of the truth, we have, at the same time, been brought face to face with another question, quite as important to consider and quite as essential to the attainment of correct and satisfactory results, namely: By what means shall this necessary co-operation be secured?

Truth is and must be cognizable, and the nature of man is endowed with capacities of cognition by the right use of which he may perceive and embrace the truth. But his endeavors to ascertain truth have resulted in conclusions inconsistent with each other, giving rise to conflicts and controversies which have illustrated, not the illusory nature of that for which he sought, but his incompetency to propound methods of search upon which all can agree. Our moral unity, originally a perfect harmony, has been disturbed to such an extent that we are no longer capable of the healthful exercise of our faculties without the introduction of some extraneous influence to direct, restrain, and sustain us.

What, then, amid all these vagaries and conflicts, is the force that shall reduce chaos to order and cause the discordant notes of controversy to melt into one majestic strain? If the voice of universal longing, the plaintive

pleading of humanity, driven almost to despair by the strife of tongues and struggling to avoid the impending fate of blank unbelief, is to be regarded as possessing any significance, it certainly demonstrates that the one thing needful is a voice to instruct and a hand to guide us in our efforts to cognize truth. Look at the history of metaphysical speculation in modern Germany, and what is it, from Kant to Schopenhauer, but chaos calling wearily for some voice of authority to speak its disorganized elements into order and harmony? So greedy is this desire for guidance that a willing flock has ever been found ready to obey any voice that would speak as with authority. Does not this disposition to trust human leaders blindly serve to illustrate in the most vivid way at once our blindness and our need of some one to guide us? Does it not also largely account for the world's great names in politics, science, literature and religion? Socrates, discoursing wisdom in the streets of Athens, and the Pythian priestess, dreaming dreams and making auguries, illustrated the desire of the people of different classes to submit themselves to the decisions of an infallible authority; nor does it require a critical scrutiny of modern society to discover the same love of hero-worship and the same willingness in every department of knowledge to abandon the mind to the guidance of some will presumed to possess the right of imperial command.

But this willingness to follow guides and leaders with implicit confidence in their powers is often found associated, strangely enough, with an extreme sensitiveness in regard to individual rights and dignities. Authority is a word which stirs the blood and provokes indignant protest. Particularly when used in its relation to religious truth, it seems to many minds to be associated with the idea of an assumed right of dictation without

appointment and without jurisdiction, or of a corporate enforcement of doctrine under physical sanctions, or of the surrender of all one's convictions into the hands of prescription. Doubtless these prejudices are inherited from the stormy epoch in which the abuses of authority precipitated the rebellion against Papacy and the reaction from scholasticism. But the principle of submission to authority in matters of belief was scarcely shaken, much less extirpated, in the sixteenth century, and there is no reason why we should be irritated by the name, seeing we accept the thing. The Reformation, after all, was only a change of masters.

In point of fact, the principle lies at the basis of all our actions and beliefs. Knowledge is conditioned upon our recognition of an authority upon whose testimony we accept given conclusions. It is impossible that we shall think a thought or lift a hand without an act of trust in testimony, and the moral claim of adequate testimony is its authority. It receives the assent of an intelligent judgment because we discover that it enjoys the right to be received, not on the ground that we are subjectively willing to receive it, but by reason of the imperative force of the evidence which it offers. The very foundations of knowledge are built upon this principle. Science cannot advance a step but by its permission. There must be a primary act of faith in that which certifies a fact or a truth to me,—whether it be a sense, a process of ratiocination, an intuition, or a voice *ab extra*,—else it is impossible that I shall acquire knowledge of, or exercise belief in, the fact or truth. Well might Goethe call himself a believer in the five senses, for how magisterially do our senses demand that we shall accept their authority! In any religious system the great mass of the “simpler folk” will be found to build their faith on the authority of the individual teacher or of the

corporate communion ; while that which is final authority to them, itself falls back either on the decisions of councils, bishops, or popes, or on the Confessions of assembled divines, or on the apparent teachings of collated texts of Holy Scripture. Even the ardent advocate of "free thought" will crowd his margins and appendices with "authorities."¹

The principle is universal. Men recognize it without protest, and without any sense of violence done to their freedom. In secular matters, they trust their all to it, and they do so spontaneously, with no fear of being betrayed. They are equally ready to recognize it in the realm of religious truth.

It is, then, in close accordance with the laws of being that the soul, conscious of its incompetency of self-government, prays, amid the anarchy of its powers, for some kingly voice, the voice of no petty majesty whose scepter reaches a portion of the realm, but some voice of imperial dignity, whose tones shall carry to the farthest boundaries of man's nature the ultimate word which it were rebellion to doubt. A prayer so importunate cannot fail to be heard and answered. It would impugn the goodness no less than the wisdom of Heaven to doubt that means would be provided by which we may ascertain the truth, and secure the aid which will enable us to cognize and embrace it with all the harmony of our co-operating powers.

Doubt needs to be assured that there is an infallible authority for faith to rest upon with the joy and peace of certitude. There is a rock of ages in this turbulent world. No storms can undermine it, no upheaval from beneath can jostle it from its calm equipoise. It eternally rests upon the being of God who is the Ultimate Authority.

Doubt needs to be warned while it is assured ; for they

¹ *Vide* Hooker i. 328.

who doubt the truth doubt the authority on which it rests, and to doubt God is to deny Him. A faith that wavers, therefore, involves itself in possible suicide. For while we may feel much sympathy with honest doubt, we must also consider that doubt undisputed leads to unbelief, which is the death of faith. Unbelief, as our Lord has taught, is the grand representative sin.¹

The entrance of doubt may be a temptation to which the Christian surrenders, in which case it is not far to Lord Byron's pitiful creed, "I doubt if doubt itself be doubting;"² or it may be resisted bias whose dark form retreats to its native gloom, driven away by the radiance of a tried but triumphant faith. In any event the means of its triumph must be the restoration to its rightful place in the soul of that authority on which the Christian man rests his belief in the truth. When we behold doubt thus transmuted into a stronger faith, we can appreciate the words of the great dramatist: "modest doubt is called the beacon of the wise." Of doubt such as this Tennyson sang in the familiar lines,

" There lives more honest faith in doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds."

The succeeding stanzas, though not so frequently quoted—sometimes purposely omitted, I suspect—describe, let us ardently trust, the experience of many who, like the one the poet-laureate knew, have been "perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds."

" He fought his doubts and gathered strength,
He would not make his judgment blind ;
He faced the specters of the mind,
And laid them ; thus he came at length

St. John xvi. 9.

² Don Juan, canto IX., xvii.

- “ To find a stronger faith his own ;
And Power was with him in the night,
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone,
- “ But in the darkness and the cloud,
As over Sinai’s peaks of old
While Israel made their gods of gold
Although the trumpet blew so loud.”

CHAPTER IV.

JESUS CHRIST THE HIGHEST AUTHORITY IN THE REALM OF TRUTH.

THE absence of harmonious and symmetrical action in the use of those states or faculties of our nature which were designed to enable us to perceive and embrace the truth has been shown to be characteristic of the various forms and degrees of unbelief which exist among men. The same defect has been seen to give rise to a chaotic condition of thought, in which conflicts have ever failed to secure definite results, aspirations after God have been baffled, and many have been tempted by keen disappointments to ask—Is there, then, such a thing as truth in the world? The one thing needful to extricate the mind from this deplorable dilemma was shown to be a voice of authority whose noble function it should be to dispel the glimmering cloud of *nebulæ* and reveal the clear-cut form and golden beauty of the truth. There is no passion in the soul of man, after the passion for truth, more eager than the desire for a guide and instructor in the search after and perception of truth; and it would seem to be a natural inference that implicit trust in authority must be a law pervading the whole realm of our existence. Faith is universal. It is the antecedent of all knowledge. There must be an act of faith in that which certifies a truth or a fact to the mind, whether it be one of the senses of the body, a process of discursive thought, an intuition or a voice *ab extra*. A condition of the mind, in which doubt with

respect to the truth of our holy religion predominates, is equivalent to a condition of mind which entertains a doubt as to the authority on which that religion bases and builds its claim to be received by mankind. But where, as is happily the case often, the doubt is resisted, a fresh and equitable scrutiny of the authority will demonstrate it to be plenary and adequate, and the results of the re-survey follow in the development of a more robust faith and a satisfactory sense of moral certitude.

Our search, then, shall be for that one decisive Voice of Authority whose imperial mandate shall solve our difficulties, dismiss our fears, and minister to our minds "the confidence of a certain faith" in respect to the essential contents of the religion of Christ.

We can scarcely imagine that even the mind which has felt the chill and shadow of a doubt will not experience a sense of sunshine when invited to recognize the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the Head of the Church, the "Teacher sent from God," "in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge * * * for in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,"¹ as the SUPREME AUTHORITY before Whom a Christian man should bow. That authority acknowledged, another step confronts the mind with the body of truth which our Lord has taught to His Church, and which, inasmuch as it provides a substantial and enduring basis of certitude, is therefore a positive antidote of doubt for the class of minds in whom doubt is still a resisted sense of uncertainty. For the supreme authority of the personal Christ passes over into what He has taught, vitalizes it, and seals it with the mark of infallibility. To appreciate the royalty of His presence, one must also acknowledge the majestic power of His words.

That our Lord was the ultimate authority in the first age

¹ Col. ii. 3, 9.

of the Church is evident. We have but to go back to the time when the Incarnate One still dwelt among men full of grace and truth. We transport ourselves in imagination to "the consummate years of Israel's fond hope." We share the enthusiasm of the poet who sang:—

'I tread where the Twelve in their wayfaring trod ;
I stand where they stood with the Chosen of God ;
Where His blessing was heard and His lessons were taught—
Where the blind were restored and the healing was wrought."¹

With the disciples we visit Him upon the mountain. We stand in the presence of the Great Teacher. We listen to His marvelous utterances, and are "astonished at his doctrine."

"For," as St. Matthew testifies, "He taught them *as one having authority* and not as the Scribes."² His words were magisterial. His doctrine was original. His demeanor was consistent with the awful claim which He put forth, and yet entirely congruous with the simplicity, sincerity, dignity, unselfishness and humility of His character. There is no doubt whatever that in the estimation of His first disciples He was the Prophet before Whom the created mind must prostrate itself. Unlike the lesser prophets of the old law, and the scribes vainly jangling over rabbinical traditions, He had a message of self-renunciation, for He was the very Logos by Whom the Infinite Mind syllabled Itself in terms suited to finite apprehension, for which cause also He came down from heaven.

It would be difficult to overstate the sublimity of this attitude. He distinctly and repeatedly put forth as the generic feature of His mission, the claim, that He had been sent forth into the world from the bosom of the Father,

¹ Poems of John Greenleaf Whittier—Palestine. Vol. i., p. 230.

² St. Matt. vii. 28, 29.

and this without reserve, qualification, or intermission. With a stately composure He added to this the stupendous announcement that His relation to God was that of identity of nature in such an absolute sense that to see Him was to see the Father. It was a necessary consequence of this relation that His doctrine represented the ultimate wisdom and truth, and revealed in part the true universal and absolute philosophy of which what we do not now know we shall know hereafter. He claimed, further, to be the moral Guide and Deliverer of mankind. He did not for one moment hesitate to exercise the divine prerogative and forgive sins. He placed His name between the throne of God and the prayers of mankind with solemn assurance of its mediating prevalence. He proposed to minister consolation to the burdened and distressed, by inviting them to seek in Himself the fountains of pity and succor. He exercised, without a trace of impious assumption, the most godlike authority over spirits, good and evil, and accepted without ostentation the ministration of the holy angels. He announced Himself as the judge of the world, holding in His hand the keys of destiny. He could not have held forth a scepter more divine, as the guide of souls and the deliverer of the human race.

Imagination cannot conceive a more imperial attitude, nor a lordship reaching more widely over the realm of destiny or more deeply into the penetralia of the human spirit.

Such a being must have possessed in Himself a primary and absolute right to "teach as one having authority." There is but one alternative. Canon Liddon in his Bampton lecture on Our Lord's Divinity, states the alternative in these words: "Christ's self-assertion is not merely embodied in statements which would be blasphemy in the mouth of a created being; it underlies and explains His

entire attitude towards His disciples, towards His countrymen, towards the human race, towards the religion of Israel. Nor is Christ's self-assertion confined to the records of one Evangelist, or to a particular period in His ministry. The three first evangelists bear witness to it in different terms, yet not less significantly than does St. John; and it belongs as truly, though not perhaps so patently, to our Lord's first great discourse as to His last. From first to last He asserts, He insists upon the acceptance of Himself. When this is acknowledged, a man must either base such self-assertion on its one sufficient justification by accepting the Church's faith in the Deity of Christ, or he must regard it as fatal to the moral beauty of Christ's human character.—*Christus si non Deus, non bonus.*"¹

Our Lord's announcement of His teaching relative to the Church was as distinct as His assertion of the celestial origin of His mission and the divinity of His person. In that prayer of mysterious depth and beauty which St. John treasured in loving memory and afterwards committed to writing, our Lord exclaimed: "This is life eternal that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. * * * *For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me*, and they have received them and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me."²

This language makes it evident that the first act of their souls was submissive recognition of His lordly right to teach them the heavenly wisdom. There was no conscious process of reasoning. The soul simply owned the presence of its Lord. The words were received because they

¹ Preface to the second edition, pp. xii., xiii.

² St. John xvii. 3, 8.

were His words, and, once received, they carried home to the heart the deeper conviction that this imperial Being came forth from the Father. The faith which, as a germ, recognized authority, as a perfect flower knew God in Christ. Obedience was justified by its fruits and rewards.

"I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me."

This, then, was the characteristic feature of the new faith, that it was a divine contact with man by the interposed mediation of a personal ambassador, with a positive message of truth, fresh from eternity and pure as heaven. The message was imperative because the Messenger was infallible. He taught with authority. "Verily, verily, I say unto you"—thus He gave the world the wisdom of the skies. There was but one practicable answer to the Galilean inquiry—"Whence hath this Man this wisdom?"¹—and the answer was given at another time in the Temple, when the officers exclaimed with bewildered astonishment, "Never man spake like this Man!"²

Hence there is no source of primary truth other than the Lord Christ. It is an excusable impatience which hastens away from every voice to listen to His. In the most exclusive sense, our religion is Christo-centric. His doctrines are true because He taught them. The facts which are connected with His teaching are significant because they were associated with and made component parts of His mission to the world by the wonderful expedient of an Incarnation. His message was therefore unique and original. He was not a teacher who had been taught. He was not a teacher teaching truths recorded on ancient parchments. The transcripts of what God spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets,³ were of exceeding value for instruction and confirmation of faith, but the stars must fade

¹ St. Matthew xiii. 54.

² St. John vii. 46.

³ Hebrews i. 1.

when the sun appears. "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son."¹ As He did not draw His wisdom out of books, still less did He supply His disciples with a sacred and solemn tome from which they might gather the lore of eternity. To them the heaven-descended religion was one of facts, and visible institutes, and truths that were true though stylus never had touched papyrus. A book religion might well describe the religion of a mere teacher ; but this was a sublime novelty in the world—the religion of a Person. Christianity was Christ, and the disciples had the transcendent privilege of listening to the living Christ Himself, who is the Truth, and Whose diviner way of recording His message was according to the promise, "I will put My law into their mind and write it in their heart ;" a method which He did not relinquish, and has not.

The truths of revelation were not enforced by our Lord because they had the sign-manual of reason upon them. They were not more exempt from the interrogations of the critical mind than the Almighty One of Whom the fool may say, "there is no God ;" but they did no violence to the reason, nor did they present one proposition which contradicted the laws of thought. When they transcended the capacity of the reflective powers they challenged reason to aspire to a loftier plane and worship while apprehending infinite things which, just because they were so high, were more divine. It is a crude and childish demand which insists that all things shall abase themselves to the level of reason. That is unreasonable reason. In its loftier flight, its nobler exercise, reason perceives its own limitations, and really attains to its own consummate beauty in accepting what it cannot comprehend exhaustively ; and for this cause we are bold to insist that in Jesus Christ reason was not dethroned but transfigured.

¹ Hebrews i. 2.

Nor did the Christian truths meet with acceptance by the early disciples because they were discovered to act upon life and form character as the truth might be presumed to do. As a matter of fact, experimental evidence soon fortified their faith,¹ but the primary ground of their belief was the word of Him Whom they recognized as a Teacher sent from God, and this was in accordance with His requirement; for, when the doubting apostles asked visible demonstration of the relations of the Father and the Son, and the Son replied, "he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father,"² He substantiated His word by the assertion of His authority as the primary, and His miracles as the secondary, basis of faith. "Believe ME that I am in the Father and the Father in Me; or else believe Me for the very works' sake."³ And the sacred record tells us that they believed, and were sure that He knew all things.⁴

¹ St. Matthew xi. 4, 5.

² St. John xiv. 9.

³ St. John xiv. 11.

⁴ St. John xvi. 30.

CHAPTER V.

*THE TEACHER SENT FROM GOD PERPETUALLY
PRESENT IN THE CHURCH.*

THE same spontaneous recognition of the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ has continued through all time. Willingly led by the facts and verities of the Gospel, the Christian makes speed to gain the presence of the Son of God, saying with St. Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."¹ Perhaps this impulse of the soul towards Him is even stronger in those who have felt the cold, deathlike touch of doubt, as children nestle closer to a parent when danger is near. But even among positive unbelievers there is a disposition to pay homage to that presence. The more recent schools of unbelief emulate the devoutest discipleship in rendering homage to our Lord. Their assaults are mostly aimed at what are, strictly speaking, the outer works of the citadel of truth. Scripture and miracle, dogma and institution, are vigorously attacked, but when the columns of assault reach the presence of the Man of Nazareth, they drop their weapons and gaze upon Him with admiration and awe. Unbelief has sunk to a low depth, indeed, when there is no beauty in Jesus Christ that it should desire Him. Rousseau's superb apostrophe to Jesus will recur to the mind. It was perhaps excelled by the tribute of the rationalist Bahrdt—"O thou great, godlike soul! no mortal can name Thy name without bending the knee, and in reverence and

¹ St. John vii. 68.

admiration feeling Thy unapproachable greatness? Where is the people among whom a man of this stamp has ever been born? How I envy you, ye descendants of Israel! Alas that you do not feel the pride which we who call ourselves Christians feel, on account of One so incomparable Being sprung of your race! * * * That soul is most depraved that knows Jesus, and does not love Him."¹

This imperial position in history awarded by the consent of the ages to this wonderful Being Whom we adore has not been explained upon any naturalistic hypothesis. The uniqueness of it and its moral magnificence constitute an argument of constantly accumulating force that He is indeed the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, shining into the darkness which admires while it comprehends Him not. Moreover, it demonstrates by its persistence (for even in this unbelieving age His name is still above every name among the foremost nations) that He is not a memory, or a spent force, or a God Who left His blessing in the world and went away, forgetful of this, to lavish His care on other worlds. No! it was totally incongruous with the spirit and purpose of our Lord's mission that He should relinquish immediate and vital relations with the world or terminate His personal authority in the realm of truth. The prime purpose of the Church which He founded was that it might bear witness to Him as the living, present Saviour to Whom all power is given in heaven and earth. It is, perhaps, easier to think of Him as there than as here, and as having all power in heaven rather than on earth. But His Church must witness to Him as He is; as there and yet here, and here as really and truly as He is there. Just because He is here He is still accessible to men in all His saving power

¹ Bahrdt: "Moralische Religion," vol. i., p. 71, quoted by Dr. Cairns in "Unbelief in the Eighteenth Century."

and grace. He is here, Head over all in His Church, receiving sinners, hearing their confessions, pronouncing absolutions, saying "Come unto Me," and "Wilt thou be made whole?" or "Be loosed from thine infirmity," or perhaps, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." His Church is not a Kingdom without a really present King. He is here actually reigning in it to-day, doing what He did of old in Galilee and Jerusalem, and greater works now than then—preaching, teaching, inviting, warning, consoling, comforting, blessing at the marriage feast and standing at the open graves of His saints; taking little children in His arms, putting His hands upon them, blessing them, rebuking those who would keep them from Him, laying on His hands at the chancel-rail in Confirmation, and, at His own board, giving Himself, the very Bread of Life, to every believing and penitent soul willing to receive Him. It seems not so to unbelief and misbelief, nor yet to those whose thoughts and hopes are bounded only by cares and pleasures of this life. It is of the very spirit of unbelief to suppose that God is not here but away off beyond the stars, serenely unmindful of us and of our small affairs, and that there is no living Lord and King of angels and of men to Whom all power is given in heaven and earth. And more or less of this spirit obtains, too, with many who are trying to love and serve Him. Oftener than otherwise they think of Him as of One Who came and dwelt among us for a little space and went away to be gone for many a long day, perhaps for ages yet to dawn: that meanwhile they have indeed His example which they are to try and copy as best they can, and His words, written down in a book, the Book in which they are to grope, without a guide, for His truth, if haply they may find it to the saving of their souls. And so they are in doubt and perturbation of mind. So they discuss and argue and deny and rationalize and

miss the blessings that might be theirs in looking to a present Saviour. From this spirit of unbelief come half the endless discussions and controversies that perplex and disgrace Christendom. A living Lord is here present in His Church, according to the sure word of His promise; but men have forgotten that promise, or they call it a mere figure of speech, and so they look upon His Church as a human organization which they are at perfect liberty to change and order as may seem good in their sight. They think of the Saviour as in heaven, not on earth; and so when He would take their children in His arms and bless them, they say, "What good will it do the child?" They think of Him as absent, not present; and so when He asks them to confess Him before men in the ways of His appointment, they regard it as simply the voice of a human teacher asking them to come to Baptism and Confirmation. Again He says, "Do this," "This is My Body," and "This is My blood," but they do not think of it as that which He is here present to impart, not as that which He would give us now, but as only a reminder of what He did for us long ago in the night in which He was betrayed. Or, because they think not of a present Saviour Whose property is always to have mercy, they turn to the Virgin Mother and to the saints at rest for help, and give to them that which should be given to Him only. Because they think not of Him as the one present infallible Guide and Teacher they transfer to a fellow-mortal an allegiance due only to Him Who is the One only infallible Lord and King of men. Thus in one way or another, the indifference, the practical unbelief, and the chief differences and controversies that afflict the Church of God and impede her work among men have their origin in unbelief in the real presence of the living Lord and Saviour of men.

It is indeed true that, prior to His Ascension, there were

announcements of departure, and the institution of other methods of teaching the knowledge of the truth ; but it was not intimated that His physical invisibility would imply His personal and potential absence, nor that His prophetic function as the "teacher sent from God" was a temporary relation to the Church. His cry, "It is finished!" dismissed from the scene only the preparative, typical and transitional aspects of the Old Covenant. True, He said "I came forth from the Father and am come into the world : again I leave the world and go to the Father ;"¹ and, "it is expedient for you that I go away."² But He also said, "I will not leave you comfortless (orphans), I will come to you ;"³ and, "a little while and ye shall not see Me, and again a little while and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father."⁴ Here, side by side, were a predicted absence and a promised presence ; but, in reality, the departure was to be nothing more than the withdrawal of His physical nature from conditions in which It could be perceived by our senses, to the intent that He might enter upon the larger enjoyment of His spiritual kingship. Temporal dominion and splendor was the Hebrew dream : a catholic sovereignty, including the whole universe of spiritual being, was the reality. And this astounding empire, vast as the cosmos of soul, enduring as the years of God, became His when, on Ascension Day, He passed out of Judea into a realm where His environment was perfectly adapted to His infinite nature. His physical disappearance, therefore, was a nearer approach and not a withdrawal. He could now sustain vital relations as the personal Christ, not only with the little flock in Judea, but with the universal Church. "So long as He was living upon earth, He might give light to the country round like

¹ St. John xvi. 28.² St. John xv. 7.³ St. John xiv. 18.⁴ St. John xvi. 16.

a beacon upon a hill. But it was only from His sunlike throne in the heavens that He could pour light over every quarter of the globe."¹ Lifted above history He could now penetrate and fill all time with His presence, and become the conspicuous object which should irradiate alike the first and the nineteenth century with His spiritual glory. Brought into prophetic relation with the ever-expanding body of the Faithful, He could now speak the messages of divine truth with not a more imperious tone of authority but to the wide jurisdiction of souls united to Him, throughout the ages, "in the communion of the Catholic Church."

Hare : "Mission of the Comforter," p. 46.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHURCH THE BODY OF CHRIST: THE PARACLETE HIS VICAR.

“AND Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.”¹ It was in these terms that our Lord, after His glorious resurrection, announced the cosmic headship and authority with which His triumphant brow was crowned, and which was to become in the most plenary sense His royal prerogative when He should take His place at the Right Hand of God for the exercise of His mediatorial sovereignty. It was to be characteristic of the inconceivable glory of His exaltation, that He Who had not where to lay His head, here in the valley of His humiliation, would by His majesty and might “fill all things,”² so that no region even in “the lower parts of the earth,” should escape the influence of His imperial scepter.

But there is a manifest distinction to be drawn between His headship of the universe and His headship of the Church. God the Father hath “raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His Own Right Hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body, the fullness of

¹ St. Matthew xxviii. 18.² Ephesians iv. 10.

Him that filleth all in all.”¹ His relations to the universe are here shown to be secondary to those which He bears to the Church. That is the one kingdom which is too dear to Him and too intimately vitalized by His Own life to be classified with the other provinces of His wide sovereignty. They are put under His feet, but this is a Body, joined to Him as its Head, in so much that it is His “fullness” or complement, without which He is not complete. His natural body has been withdrawn from our world of sense, but He is still present in the Church, which is His mystical Body,—“a body mystical,” says Hooker,² “because the mystery of their conjunction is altogether removed from sense;” but not the less truly existing and perpetuated in time and space by virtue of that conjunction. It is not possible but that men shall go astray in their conceptions of the relation of our Lord to the Church and the world unless they firmly grasp that sublime thought which glorifies the pages of St. Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians specially, but which also illuminates all the New Testament writings, that the Church is the Living Body of Christ manifesting Himself through all ages. He is its life, its regnant power, its unifying principle, standing above it, and yet comprising it in Himself; so that in it He makes a continuous world-wide manifestation of Himself, and by it accomplishes His purposes throughout the successive generations of history. By virtue of this mystical union (not metaphorical but real, constituting an organic corporateness), He Who is the Head of the Body works His will, invisibly, but not less efficiently because He is concealed behind the instrumentalities which He elects to employ. To say that Christianity is Christ is to speak in such a way as may give the impression that it is a system or code, and that He is simply the master-mind

¹ Ephesians i. 20-23.

² “Works,” III., i, 2.

Whose spirit and influence pervade it. But there is a closer approximation to the mysterious truth,¹ when we say that the Church is Christ. It is Christ mystically manifested in time and space, and having a relation to the eternal purposes of God that transcends the necessity of our race and touches the well-being of all worlds, to the intent that to them there may be a continual revelation of the manifold wisdom of God.² It is only in the light of this Christo-centric view of the Church that we can adequately appreciate the nature of the divine-human organism against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. Beautifully did the late Bishop of Brechin illustrate this primary yet profound truth when he wrote: "The Redeemer did not merely live eighteen hundred years ago so as since to have disappeared and to exist only in history; He is, on the contrary, eternally living in the Church. He is the abiding and only Teacher. His are all the baptisms, absolutions, confirmations, ordinations. The Church is not a lifeless corpse, but His living Body, instinct with, penetrated, quickened, hallowed by His life."³

Thus, then, we perceive how He Who has gone to take His place at the head of the universe includes within the mystery of an organic union the whole Church throughout the world, and is more really and effectually accomplishing infinite designs by it, and discharging His prophetic, priestly, and kingly functions in it than if He were an all-conquering Theocrat, enthroned in some imperial Salem, as the seat of omnipotence and the metropolis of a spiritual civilization.

But the elevation of the Incarnate One above the conditions of time and space was succeeded by another step

¹ Ephesians v. 32.

² Ephesians iii. 10.

³ Forbes, "Explanation of the Nicene Creed," p. 172.

in the unfolding thought of God, having reference to the perpetuation of truth and its fuller development.

All the Persons of the Blessed Trinity are ever and everywhere supremely active, each one pouring Himself forth in inexhaustible streams of wisdom, beneficence, and power ; but a survey of the history of God's contact with the race of mankind indicates a certain order of personal manifestation to have been observed. As the anticipative activity of the Father had preceded the theanthropic advent of the Son, so this preceded the unmeasured communication of the Holy Ghost to the Church.

When our Lord was about to go away from visible relations with His Church, He consoled His disciples with the promise : "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter that He may abide with you forever ; even the Spirit of Truth."¹ The office of the promised Comforter was announced² to be to testify of Christ, to teach all things, to act as the blessed Paraclete, to guide into all truth, to bring to remembrance, to show things to come, to abide with the Church forever, to regenerate the soul, to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, and to glorify Christ, "for He shall take of Mine and show it unto you."³

Our Lord further announced a necessary connection between His Ascension and the Descent of the Holy Ghost. It was expedient for the Church that He should go away, "for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart I will send Him unto you."⁴ We may not be able to fathom all the depths of this expediency, because it is permitted us to know only in part the economic relations which subsist between the Persons of the Blessed Trinity ; but we do know that, as

¹ St. John xiv. 16, 17,

² St. John xiv. and xvi.

³ St. John xvi. 14.

⁴ St. John xvi. 7.

our Lord taught, it was not until He was glorified that the Holy Ghost came in the power and fullness of the new age. If we may indulge a hypothesis, possibly the Holy Spirit could condescend to resume intimate contact with the Humanity which had done Him such despite in losing the image of God, only after that Humanity, as assumed in spotless purity by the Eternal Son, was exalted to the throne of mediatorial sovereignty at the Right Hand of the Majesty on high.¹

But the munificent fullness of this manifestation of the Holy Ghost must not be misinterpreted as implying in any sense the banishment of the Head from His relations to the Body. To predicate the personal and potential absence of the Son from the Church because of the mission of the Spirit to it, would be to contradict the promises and covenants which He made, and a severance on such terms were impossible. He Who in consequence of a mysterious expediency must withdraw, physically, from the world of sense, declared that in a little while the Church should see Him again. "I go to My Father and ye see Me no more;"²—thus He predicted His invisibility to the out-

¹ "Was it that the glory and intercession of Christ in Heaven was to be a main topic of consolation addressed by the Spirit to the heart of the bereaved Church? Was it that the presence of our Lord in the Flesh might have continued those earthly yearnings towards Him which were more or less inconsistent with a spiritual appreciation of His Work and of His Person? Was it that the victory must be *perfectly* won ere the gifts for men which the Conqueror receives can be dispensed in their fullness from heaven? Was it that the mighty power of Christ's Intercession in heaven must be revealed to Christians by the magnificence of its first result? or may not the heavenly Artist descend to reproduce the Image of Christ in the conscience and heart of humanity until the Divine Original has been completed?"—Liddon, "University Sermons," ser. x. *Vide* Hare, "Mission of the Comforter," Note A: and Martensen, "Dogmatics," p. 333.

² St. John xvi, 10,

ward eye. "Again a little while and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father,"¹—thus He foretold the more glorious presence which was verified at Pentecost, and which has ever been effected by the Holy Spirit in the Church, as a perpetual indwelling, variously manifested by sacramental and other agencies.

The very terms in which our Lord described the work which the Holy Spirit was to do in the Church indicate that it was not to involve independence of action. He was to come only as He was sent.² He was to bring to remembrance what the Lord had said, and, in testifying of the Son, "shall not speak of Himself: whatsoever He shall hear that shall He speak."³ It is thus made very evident that the Spirit was to exercise His distinctive functions in the Church under the mission and government of the Church's Head. Within the sphere of His mediatorship, the King Emmanuel was absolute because the Father had committed all things into His hand, and to no other end greater than that of ministering to the glory of the King did the Spirit receive and accept His pentecostal mission. "All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you."⁴

This declaration not only reveals the subordination which economically attaches to the work of the Spirit, but it identifies, with equal emphasis, the teaching of the Spirit with the teaching of the Son; and this prepares the way for the proposition that just to the extent that the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ is authoritative and binding upon the Christian conscience, to the same extent precisely must the teaching of the Holy Spirit be so regarded. The mise that He should lead the Church into all truth (*πᾶσαν*

¹ St. John xvi. 16.

² St. John xiv. 26.

³ St. John xvi. 13.

⁴ St. John xvi. 15.

τὴν ἀλήθειαν¹—all the truth), was positive and without qualification: it is, therefore, possible for the Church to fall short of infallible knowledge of the truth only when the promise that the Spirit of truth shall abide with her forever, shall prove false.

It was a privilege to enjoy, as the Apostles did, the personal fellowship and instruction of the Lord in the intimacy of an earthly companionship, but every step in the manifestation of God for the welfare of the world indicates a process of cumulative blessing. The dispensation of the Spirit is a more intimate method of divine contact. Our Lord's perpetual presence in the Church, therefore, and His continual announcement of truth should be, to the perplexed mind, more profoundly still than an oral ministration, a refuge from doubt and a basis of certitude; for the descent of the Spirit was characterized by a fuller manifestation of the truth, and the conjunction of the invisible Head with the visible Body was to the end, as St. Paul says, "that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine."² The original body of dogmatic truth is still taught by Him, but in ampler measure. Because the union between the Head and the Body has not been terminated He is still here among us engaged in the discharge of His prophetic function. "There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all;"³ and the one Body exists to-day as it did when He was visibly its Head, and the one Voice of prophecy has not varied a syllable. Truth, like its Author, is the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever.

¹ 1 St. John xvi. 13.

² Eph. iv. 16.

³ Eph. iv. 5, 6.

CHAPTER VII.

*THE PROMISE OF GUIDANCE FULFILLED IN THE
CATHOLIC FAITH.*

THE Son of God, Who is the eternal Logos or Revealer, has in different dispensations of revealed truth and goodness, chosen different methods of making the divine will known to men. Previous to the incarnation, He acted by theophanies and prophecies, but at length He exercised a theanthropic ministry upon the earth. That method was succeeded, or rather supplemented, by the promised descent of the Holy Ghost to guide the Church into all truth.

Intelligibility is of the essence of a revelation. The distinctness of His previous unfoldings of the divine mind would lead us to anticipate that, as the personal organ of revelation, He would honor the means by which He chose to communicate so much of the truth as was necessary to the being of the Church and the welfare of the world. He could not have left the question, What is Truth? to float in the nebulous region of hypothesis. He could not have founded the Church and sent the Comforter to dwell within her, as steps to inaugurate a dispensation of uncertainty. To contemplate Him as the enthroned Mediator, having all power in heaven and on earth, and to recognize the mission of the Holy Spirit to impress truth upon the mind of the Church, without looking to find a strong foundation of moral certitude with respect to the essential features of that truth, would really be to resolve the Head of the Church into a vision of spiritual beauty forever faded. Then doubt were justified, and unbelief were

reasonable. Then the throbbing question would be, how to account for the survival through so long a lapse of time of a religion which had failed to fulfill the promises of its Founder.

But it has not failed. The Catholic Faith rescues us from the painful alternative. Constantly has the Holy Spirit taken of the things of Christ and shown them unto the Church, and constantly has the Church repeated her earliest efforts to ascertain the mind of the Spirit when, by the associated and sympathetic fellowship of "the apostles and elders with the whole Church,"¹ she was enabled to secure that invisible guidance and trustworthy illumination which justified the positive announcement, "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us;"² and as constantly have the multitude of believing souls rejoiced in submitting themselves to a method so divine and infallible, by accepting the Catholic Faith with implicit confidence in the authority of Jesus Christ. Of perpetual application are the words of St. Vincent: "He is a true and genuine Catholic that loveth the truth of God, the Church, the Body of Christ—that preferreth nothing before the religion of God, nothing before the Catholic Faith; not any man's authority, not love, not wit, not eloquence, not philosophy; but, contemning all these things, and in faith abiding, fixed and stable, whatsoever he knoweth the Catholic Church universally in old time to have holden, that only he proposeth with himself to hold and believe. But whatsoever doctrine new and not before heard of, such an one shall perceive to be afterward brought in of some one man, beside all or contrary to all the Saints, let him know that that doctrine doth not pertain to religion, but rather to temptation; especially being instructed with the sayings of the blessed Apostle St. Paul For this is that which he

¹ Acts xv. 22.

² Acts xv. 28.

writeth in his faithful Epistle to the Corinthians—There must (quoth he) be heresies also, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you—as though he would say, this is the cause why the authors of heresies are not straight rooted out by God, that the approved may be made manifest; that is, that of every one it may appear how steadfastly, faithfully, and constantly he loveth the Catholic Faith.”¹

The actual existence of this body of Christian teaching, containing all things necessary to be believed and done in order to salvation, and held by the whole Church with moral unanimity from the beginning to the present time, witnesses with an emphasis that is overpowering to the fact that our Lord has not been unmindful of His promise. The Holy Spirit illustrates the verity of His mission in the existence of the accepted dogmas of Christianity, as the Church illustrates the reality of her divine origin by receiving them and holding them with gratitude and invincible tenacity.

As the mathematical computations of Le Verrier instructed him to turn his glass to a particular quarter of the heavens in order to discover a new planet, which at once revealed its golden beauty to his gaze, so the natural and necessary steps of progress which the mind takes in tracing the pathway of our Lord's relation to His Church as the Teacher sent from God have brought us face to face with the Catholic faith. This is what the Church holds to be of the essence of Christianity, which the Church professes and teaches her children to profess and believe. It is the Catholic Faith because the Catholic Church holds it, and that, too, in a Catholic sense. But the Church holds it because the Body of Dogma, of which it is composed, and which is almost entirely contained in the Catholic

¹ St. Vincent of Lerins, “Commonitorium,” chap. xx.

Creeds, is identified as the teaching of the Holy Spirit by the test of Catholic or universal acceptance. The application of this criterion definitively fixes the boundaries of essential truth. The Catholic Faith is not a dream—a theory—a philosophy. It includes and excludes certain definite things.

It includes all the Historical Facts connected with the Incarnation and the Incarnate Life of our Lord, all the Truths revealed with regard to the Constitution of the Divine Nature, all the Institutes and Media which our Lord established as the ministers and channels of His grace, and all the Doctrines which He taught, personally or mediately, and which the whole Church has always received and maintained. In one word, Catholic Dogma includes all things which a Christian man ought to know and believe in order that (for Christianity is a life as well as a science, and doctrines imply duties) he may daily increase in the Holy Spirit more and more until he come unto God's everlasting kingdom.

It excludes everything which is not the statement by adequate authority of a truth revealed from heaven or of a fact connected with that revelation ; that is to say, it excludes—

1. Opinions or speculations which are of individual origin and limited acceptance.
2. Systematized statements of doctrine based upon some private philosophical view of religion.
3. Widely held but not universally received inferences from Catholic Dogma.
4. Views which are claimed to constitute the peculiarity of any special sect of people without, or coterie or party within, the Church.
5. Obscure ideas in Holy Scripture upon which three has not prevailed any consensus of interpretation.

6. Facts and ordinances which, while religious in their character, lack divinely ordered connection with the rise and development of the kingdom of heaven.

The principle which necessitates this line of separation by which some things are included in the Body of Catholic Dogma and some things excluded from it, is that nothing can be accepted as binding upon the faith of the Church except that which is announced to be true by an adequate authority. The vitality of Catholic Dogma is entirely dependent upon the authority which has promulgated it. Its truth may be made to appear upon other grounds, rational, historical, exegetical, logical, or experimental, and it will bear every test which may be fairly applied to it, because it is true ; but as part of the essential contents of Christianity it must be accepted primarily because the authority which announces it is incontestable, supreme, and absolute. The universality of its acceptance is at once the proof and consequence of its origin.

It is by the application of the same test that we distinguish that which is essential and that which is incidental. Relatively to its Author, all truth is essential ; but relatively to mankind as contemplated by the Christian revelation, that only is essential which contributes to fulfill the purposes of the revelation. Revelation does not comprehend all truth. As there are stars in the sky which the glass of the astronomer has not discerned, there are heights of divine wisdom which we have not reached ; but our responsibility does not include these. There are heavenly bodies visible to the eye whose motions and governing laws the skill of science cannot fully master, just as there are connected with the teachings of our Lord suggestions of truths, glimpses of profound thoughts, obscure hints of loftier planes of knowledge, hints of a generalization that overarches all time, space, being, eternity itself, with a philos-

ophy too sublime to be compared with the fragmentary theories of men,—which in the present life, at least, we may not expect to know in their fullness. Had the necessities of our race required them to contribute essential elements in the scheme of the Incarnation, they would have been revealed with sufficient distinctness, and they would properly have been included in the body of dogmatic truth.

There will be found to exist some private differences of opinion concerning what ought to be regarded as essential truth. Doubtless the advocates of views, systems, philosophies, and interpretations, which are eliminated from the catalogue of necessary dogmas will feel themselves challenged to plead for criteria which shall discriminate in their favor, but as our argument progresses we hope to make it appear that the criterion of catholicity is not an arbitrary one, dictated by polemic urgencies, but is grounded in the very nature of things, and constitutes for the Church and for the doubting Christian an infallible test of essential truth because distinctly and immediately related to the authority of the Teacher sent from God.

CHAPTER VIII.

*THE MODE AND EFFECTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S
TEACHING INFLUENCE.*

THAT august Being Who is the supreme authority in the realm of truth discharges His prophetic function by the vicariate of the Holy Ghost. But to whom does the Holy Ghost deliver the things which He has received, and where shall we find the organ of His infallible deliverances? This question leads on to another—How shall we connect the Body of truth which is designated Catholic Dogma with the influential activity of the Holy Spirit and the ultimate authority of our Lord Jesus Christ?

It has already been intimated that the very fact of the existence of a Body of Dogmatic Truth which rightly bears the title of Catholic because of the universality of its reception by the Church, throws a flood of light upon the work of the Holy Spirit in His vicarial office of teacher and guide. It shows that the Spirit does in very deed exercise His function in the sense of universality of contact with the Church's mind; that is to say, as Catholic Dogma demonstrates the fact that there is on the part of the Church a universality of acceptance, so this acceptance shows that the relation of the Spirit to the mind of the Church is universal.

St. Paul elaborated this thought in his first epistle to the Corinthians.¹ He found occasion in the peculiar condi-

¹ Cor. ch. xii.

tion of the Church at Corinth to give special instruction with regard to the effects which had been wrought by the influence of the Holy Spirit. These were either the ordinary graces and virtues proceeding from Him, by immediate contact or by sacramental agency, or those extraordinary endowments (such as inspiration and the charisms)¹ which were not designed to continue permanently in the Church. The Corinthians were to some extent unbalanced by the marvelous character of these supernatural phenomena, and the Apostle sought to quiet their dissensions by a variety of counsels, among which the most prominent had reference to the principle of unity which denotes the Church as the Body of Christ. All the gifts of the Spirit are the gifts of that one Spirit into Whom we have all been baptized into one Body. For as the human form is one and yet has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, "*so also is Christ.*"² It followed, therefore, that, although the gifts which the Spirit had poured out in such affluence of grace were individual endowments, they were distributed to each one, severally, only because these were parts of an organism which bound them up in a vital unity, countlessly diversified in its membership but ever abiding as a complex and glorious whole, because Christ is one.³ He is the principle of its unity and

¹ Compared with His ordinary gifts these charisms were not more supernatural, but they were not permanent, nor did they enjoy greater honor on that day of exciting and seemingly inebriating transports, for the Apostles stood with singular serenity among the astonished people while St. Peter preached a thoughtful sermon; and then they proceeded to administer the sacrament of the new birth, as our Lord had commanded. As methods of contact between the Spirit and the Church, they seem to differ from the ordinary methods in degree rather than nature. In either case, there is the same mystery of operation.

² 1 Cor. xii. 12.

³ "*Totus Christus caput et corpus est.*"—St. Augustine.

the source and sustainer of its life, working His will in it none the less really because invisibly, by the Holy Spirit, through various means and methods, and coming into influential relation with the individual because each one is a member of the one Body. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."¹

This is such a community of life, and of faith, and of suffering, and of hope, that while each receives from the whole, each also contributes to it. Our union with the Church is the ground of our communion with each other. It is like the falling of rain-drops into the current of a mighty river, which do not lose their identity, but gain what in their individuality they could not have secured.

This truth has been well stated by the learned author of the Bampton Lecture for 1868 in the following words: "We believe with St. Cyprian and St. Augustine that when Christ promised to St. Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven,² He promised them to the Church at large, whose faith and whose unity St. Peter on that occasion represented. We believe that in the case of the admission of a child or a converted heathen into the Body of Christ by Holy Baptism, it is the Church at large, the common parent of Christians,³ who bears as a mother the newly-made member of the Body. We believe that in the Holy Communion it is the whole Church, the Body of Christ, which commemorates the life-giving sacrifice of the Lord, feeding its unity and its holiness by feeding on the meat indeed and the drink indeed of His spiritual Body and Blood. We believe that in Absolution it is the Church's peace that is given; that in excommunication the sentence is to be pronounced upon such as, when their sin has been told

¹ Cor. xii. 13.

² St. Matt. xiv. 18.

³ Gal. vi. 26.

to the Church, refuse to hear the Church.¹ If a council makes decrees in matters of faith, it does so not as overruling the Church, nor as issuing laws of faith to the Church, upon its own authority, but as representing, more or less faithfully, the entire Church, and speaking in its name; so that its decrees are binding in exact proportion to that faithfulness. All these things speak plainly to the great truth that in the Church, in its entirety, in all its members, not in some one only, dwells the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and so the ultimate authority which nothing but the indwelling of the Holy Spirit can give."²

The relation of the Holy Spirit to the mind of the whole Church, viewed in its entirety as a Catholic organism, is not a truth that can be exhaustively defined and made simple to a child. Like the highest mountains, it hides its summit in the clouds. The distinctive elements of supernatural religion must, by their very nature, transcend the limits of our power of comprehension, because, as truths and ordinances, they represent no mere department of creation, no rudimentary expression of the will of God, but the very fullness of His wisdom; and therefore lead upward, beyond the line of our ability to follow, toward the very bosom of the Infinite. Hence we should expect to find an inscrutable factor in every truth of our religion, as the token of its divine authorship.

The union which subsists between the Head of the Church, and the Body, the Living Organism, is a "mystical union." In like manner, the psychological method by

¹ St. Matt. xviii. 17.

² "Administration of the Holy Spirit." Bampton Lecture for 1868. By George Moberley, D.C.L., Lord Bishop of Salisbury. Pp. 47, 48. In the same chapter, Dr. Moberley shows that this, however, is only half of a great truth—the supplement of which is the existence in the Church of a divinely authorized representative priesthood.

which the Holy Spirit impresses truth upon the mind of this organism, this Catholic unity, does not reveal itself. The fact appears, the *modus* is concealed within the clouds that envelop its summit. Indeed, it is evident that as a mode of communication it is less perspicuous than that which our Lord employed when, visibly present among men, he discharged His prophetic functions orally. After His Ascension, the Apostles must have remained in total darkness as to the character of that coming of the Comforter which, while it had been distinctly promised, had not been described. The result also of the coming was distinctly announced, but there was entire silence as to its *modus*. When the day of Pentecost was fully come, certain supernatural incidents of the descent of the Spirit were audible or visible, but the actual coming was enveloped in mystery. They knew the event and were conscious of the results, There was an immediate operation of the Spirit upon their whole nature, and "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance ;"¹ but it was regulated by a law of psychological contact which has not been revealed, and which, if we may dare to speculate upon so divine a mystery, is one of those "deep things of God" for whose expression there is no adequate equivalent in a language of finite terms.

Our Lord foreshadowed the inscrutability of the Spirit's work in His conversation with Nicodemus,² when He announced the necessity of the new birth by water and the Spirit, a revelation of truth which astounded the aged inquirer. His astonishment took the shape of a query, How?—the perpetually recurring question of the over-curious mind ; *in quo modo*, what is the method of bestowing this supernatural birth? To this our Lord replied by an analogy drawn from nature and designed not to define the

¹ Acts ii. 4.

² St. John iii.

truth, but to illustrate the mystery of it : "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Our Lord meant to show that as the "breath of God" in the natural world "bloweth where it listeth," thus the breath of God within the kingdom of heaven is, as to its mode of contact, independent of the control of man. The mobile air floats calmly on the bosom of the deep, or lashes it to fury ; imparts a gentle motion to the leaves of the forest, or levels it to the earth with its stern vehemence. Only in a heathen's imagination did Æolus confine the winds in a cave, and send them forth to do their varied errands on the earth. So this life-giving, all-pervading Spirit freely breathes on the souls of men and inspires them with thoughts of God, the just Judge and merciful Saviour. But the eye cannot detect that which in the physical world we call wind. A voice goes moaning through the forest on a winter night, or breathes on the strings of the harp which has been placed at the window, and we say, it is the wind : but what we actually cognize is the effect of an agency imperceptible to our senses. "Thou hearest the sound thereof,"—that is all.

The perfection of the analogy to illustrate our Lord's thought comes out more beautifully at every step. The mighty Agent, Who works in baptism and all the sacraments, Who moves on the heart, convicting it of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment ; Who by multiform instrumentalities brings to bear upon the souls of men the powers of the world to come, and Who leads the Church into all truth, utterly eludes the recognition of sense, and does not permit Himself to reveal the hand which does the work, nor us to hear the "still, small voice" that in the

silence of the soul whispers the truth of God. Only by His works do we know Him. He does not suffer any mind to catch the remotest glimpse of His methods. Here is absolute mystery—"thou canst not tell." Sooner hope to fathom the secret law which regulates the mission of the winds. The air that fans our brows to-day may have blown over the wide seas yesterday, and to-morrow may refresh the invalid in some distant sick-room—"thou canst not tell." Speculation is in vain. And the conclusion of the matter is that, as science cannot explain all the phenomena of meteorology, neither should Nicodemus marvel that he must accept the agency of the Holy Spirit in the new birth as a mystery.

In contemplating the operations of the Holy Spirit as commissioned by our Lord and descending in the majesty and power of His infinite nature to write the wisdom of the new dispensation upon the impressible mind of the Church, we must accept whatever limitations God may see fit to place upon that august mission. The theologian who assumes an oracular tone in discussing the deep things of God knows no more than the "little child" of the kingdom. But the mystery of the mode need not obscure the reality of that principle of contact by virtue of which the Spirit takes of the things of Christ, and shows them in distinct outline to the mind of the whole Church as the means of her salvation and the assurance of her finally accomplishing the purposes of God. The Body by which the truth is perceived and stated must be the Body to which the truth is revealed. The "one Spirit" and the "one Church" are the parents of the "one Faith."

Reverently passing from the mystery of the Spirit's methods, we may now consider the effects produced by His teaching influence upon the mind of the Church—the *ecumenical mind*.

These are neither concealed from us nor surrounded by mystery,—“thou hearest the sound thereof.”¹ The Holy Spirit as the Way-Leader,² the Guide, has conducted the Church to the sunlit regions of a definite revelation—an *ecumenical faith*. When St. Paul wrote to the Ephesian Christians that the one Lord, the one Body, the one Spirit were associated with the one Faith, he further taught them that our Saviour’s Ascension Gifts³ were bestowed upon the Church to promote and insure this specific end, that the Church should attain “the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God,”⁴ and this purpose once accomplished the Church would not only possess the unspeakable treasure of an irreformable and abiding creed, but would be by that means panoplied and defended against error. A fixed and definite “one Faith” would tend to develop such a maturity of conviction, such growth of faith “unto a perfect man” that we should “henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love may grow up into Him in all things, Which is the Head, even Christ: from Whom the whole Body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the Body unto the edifying of itself in love.”⁵

This truth spoken in love is the Catholic Faith. It is

¹ St. John iii. 8.

² *Ὁδηγός*. St. John xvi. 13—*Ὁδηγήσει ὑμᾶς εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν*. He shall lead the way for you into all the truth.

³ Ephesians iv. 11—“And He GAVE some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.”

⁴ Ephesians iv. 13.

⁵ Ephesians iv. 14, 15, 16.

that body of truth which the Holy Spirit has impressed upon the mind of the Church viewed as a corporate unity. It cannot be denied as an abstract possibility that His prophetic relation to an individual might be plenary, but there is no evidence that such an instance has ever occurred. It would require a special revelation to certify the case if one should occur, because the individual would not necessarily be able to perceive it as a fact of consciousness, nor would others receive it without adequate testimony. When, however, we contemplate all Christians as a mass, and not as a mass of units knit together by some natural tie of sympathy or likeness, or of principle and leadership, but as a mass formed into one supernatural body by the fusing power of Him Who vitalizes the unity by His indwelling, viewed thus, we say, there is in the Church an underlying corporate life, one in its origin, its sustentation, and its destiny, upon which, as upon a sensitized plate, He photographs the essential truths, the only truths which need to be presented to us with infallible accuracy; and this unity of impression is the assurance of unity in the apprehension and unison in the statement of those truths.

The pure, distinct, univocal strain of the whole Church, filling all ages with its music, is the voice of the Great Teacher by the Holy Spirit, and formulated it becomes Catholic Dogma. Here is rock for the doubter to stand upon, and renew his faith.

Many methods of verifying the essential truths of Christianity have been announced, and all are good so far as they do good; but for the most part, though they are broad paths for a little space and thronged with eager multitudes, they lead to mazes, to cloud-land, to dismal midnight. For every nostrum there is a constituency. But surely that method must be obligatory, as well as certain to reward the mind that applies it honestly, which flows smoothly out

from the fountain of our Lord's promises to the Church, and harmonizes with the facts of history, which are but the fulfillment of those promises.

If this criterion were no more than a hypothesis, one of many such, further pursuit of the subject might be idle ; but its concordance with the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, its consistency with the actual developments of the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, and its universal acceptance among Christian people, at least as to the essential principle which underlies it, warrant us in challenging other methods to a comparison. But we shall first ascertain to what extent it is illustrated by the initial chapter of Christian history.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DAY OF PENTECOST—INSPIRED ORAL MINISTRATION.

ON the day of Pentecost our Lord was present with His Church as He had not before been—that is, unrestricted by the limitations to which He submitted when exercising His mediatorial ministry upon the earth in visible form. No longer subject to the conditions of time and space, He came into new relations with His Church by the descent of the Spirit. The promise of the Paraclete was fulfilled. To the whole Church, then no more than a grain of mustard-seed, but holding in itself the potential life that was to develop into the many-limbed tree of Catholicity, the Holy Ghost was communicated as the Giver of Life, the Witness of Truth, the Author of Holiness, and the Source of Illumination. *The results* were immediately apparent.

At once the Church gave forth appropriate tokens of the new indwelling, for, “being filled with the Holy Ghost,” they “began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.” The scattering Babel curse of many tongues met its antithesis in a blessing which broke down the partitions that divided humanity, and included all people in the bond of a Catholic unity.

At once the coward Apostle became rock-like, and stood up with the Eleven to repel the charge of inebriation, while in holy boldness he proclaimed what the illuminating glory

of the new light had now revealed to him, that the Pentecostal manifestations were due to the power of Him Who had died and risen again. "Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."¹

At once the sacramental agency by which the Church was to make conquests from a penitent world, and by which the influence of the Spirit was to be propagated, was announced: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."²

At once there was a more vivid apprehension of the spiritual grandeur of the Incarnation and all its associations. The facts of our Lord's earthly history became transfigured with supernatural beauty, and to such an extent was their appreciation thereof intensified by the conscious influence of the Spirit, that when the Apostles announced themselves "witnesses of these things" they added, "and so is also the Holy Ghost Whom God hath given to them that obey Him."³ It was to them a distinct proof of the presence of the Spirit of God that one should confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.⁴

At once appeared that didactic function which, not less than the sacramental, inhered in the apostolic office, according to the commission—"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world;"⁵ and

¹ Acts ii. 33.

² Acts ii. 38.

³ Acts iv. 32.

⁴ 1 St. John iv. 2. See also 1 Cor. xii. 3.

⁵ St. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

these unlearned men caused the rabbinical doctors, skilled in the deepest lore of the schools, to marvel at their messages.

At once a concrete Faith emerged, and "the Apostles' doctrine" was closely associated with their "fellowship," as among the first fruits of the Holy Spirit's influence.¹

At once the unifying purpose and power of the Head revealed itself in the Body, and, being filled with the Holy Ghost, "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul."²

Thus Pentecost is seen to have been a new era, a fresh start for man, another Genesis; the second Adam at its head; the life-giving Spirit brooding over it; with this larger blessing resting upon it, that He Who visited the ancient covenant people, in veiled form and with measured power, was now to abide in the Church in the fullness of a personal ministration forever.³

¹ Acts ii. 42.

² Acts iv. 31, 32.

³ "Although the Holy Spirit was formerly given in and under the law, yet after the appearance of the Gospel it was no longer obtained by the followers of the law, but was their privilege, who, having left the law, believed in the Gospel. The Most Holy Dove forsook the ark of Moses and fixed its habitation in the Church of Christ. The Spirit left the letter, as the soul the body, and the law became truly a dead letter. A sufficient proof of which were the conspicuous gifts of the Holy Spirit, transferred from the Synagogue to the Church, when on the day of Pentecost not a tempest of thunder and lightning and horror, as when formerly on this very day the old law was given from Mount Sinai, but the mighty power of the Holy Spirit descended from heaven, and appearing in the form of fiery tongues, settled on the Apostles; and soon after the same miraculous gifts were generally and abundantly poured out upon the whole congregation of Christians; while with the professors of the law 'the spirit of slumber' alone remained—a spirit truly worthy of those who, when the substance itself was offered them, pined after the shadow."—Bishop Bull on "Justification," Dis. 2, ch. 11, § 7.

This initial chapter of the history of the new dispensation, in revealing *the results* of the descent of the Holy Ghost, also brings to light *the means* by which these results were accomplished.

The mission of the Spirit embraced many functions, in the discharge of which He made use of a diversity of means. It will be sufficient for our present purpose to enumerate such as He employed in order to lead the Church into all truth.

But why may we not regard all the means and instruments whereby He communicates with the spirit of man as contributing to a deeper insight into truth, and more explicit mastery of its terms? Blindness and ignorance are the offspring of sin; holiness is the sister of knowledge. The sacrament of the new birth is associated with a specific grace, but we may well believe it of those three thousand souls who were baptized on Pentecost that their love of divine wisdom, and their capacity of acquiring it, were stimulated by the grace of baptism; and of those who were subsequently blessed with the Laying on of Hands, that they gratefully received the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and knowledge. It is of the very essence of all graces that they clear the faculties, enlighten the whole being, and prepare the way for the entrance of new conceptions of truth and nobler views of the being and attributes of God.

Of the means which were specially chosen and peculiarly adapted to the instruction of the Church in the knowledge of the new truths, the Apostolic Ministry in its various ranks came first in the order of time and importance, not as having in itself any light to shed, but as reflecting the light of the Pentecostal flame. It was the divine idea of the Protevangelion to save man by man;¹ nor was this

¹ Gen. iii. 15.

principle laid aside as soon as the Incarnation was effected. As the Only Begotten Son of God, our Blessed Lord occupied a substantial relation with the Godhead which could be shared by no creature, not even the Archangel himself ; but as the Son of Man He was " the first-born among many brethren,"¹ the " apostle and high-priest of our profession,"² who was to be accompanied and succeeded by a human ministry. Between Him and them there was established a certain correspondence of mission, in such wise that the sending forth of the Eternal Son from the bosom of the Father met its analogy in their mission at the hands of the Son. " As My Father hath sent Me, EVEN so send I you."³ Therefore He gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to the Church, " for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ."⁴ Between Him and them there was also established a representative relation. He was the Divine Principal : they were His agents. Hence they were designated ambassadors for Christ.

Called as " chosen vessels," sent in a purely ministerial capacity, successful in their labors only as God gave the increase, their well-defined mission was to do the will of Him Who sent them, He living in them and doing His work by them, not purposing that they should be the ambassadors of a distant sovereign, but the visible agents of a royal Master, Who would invisibly accompany them, and work in and by them, through His Holy Spirit.

As the instrument by which at the first the Spirit impressed the truths of revelation upon the mind of the Church, the apostolic ministry was entrusted with a peculiar mission. While He dwelt in and enlightened the whole Body, there were diversities of gifts and of operations,⁵

¹ Rom. viii. 29.² Heb. iii. 1.³ St. John xx. 21.⁴ Eph. iv. 11, 12.⁵ 1 Cor. xii.

adapted to accomplish particular ends. Some might share the common gifts and yet enjoy the privilege of a special endowment, the Holy Spirit "dividing to every man severally as He will."¹ In the exercise of His sovereign choice of means, He "Who spake by the Prophets," among whom are to be numbered the Apostles and all others whom He employed as the instruments of His authoritative teaching, conferred this peculiar honor.

At the outstart, their method of instruction was *oral*. *Prior sermo quam liber: prior sensus quam stylus.*² The message which they were commissioned to proclaim was designated either as "the Gospel" or as "the Word of God." "Repent ye and believe the Gospel,"³ was our Lord's commandment to the people who "pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God;"⁴ and such was the message of the apostolic ministry, delivered with less reserve, enlarged, developed and enforced by "the demonstration of the Spirit and of power."⁵

The Word of God, which was the matter of their message, was not blazoned upon parchments, but was a concrete manifestation of acts, thoughts and purposes of divine origin. It was God's love addressing the world in sign-language. As a revelation, it had reference to the facts of history, of which the apostles and prophets had personal knowledge, of teachings which they had received from the Lord, of spiritual functions with which they had been invested by Him, and of observances which He had commanded them to teach.⁶ It was a revelation of divine wisdom, power and love, "written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart."⁷ The distinction between a

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 11.² Tertullian: *De Testimonio Animæ*, c. 5.³ St. Mark i. 15.⁴ St. Luke v. 1.⁵ 1 Cor. ii. 4.⁶ St. Matt. xxviii. 20.⁷ 2 Cor. iii. 3.

revelation and a record or history of it reduced to writing, is evident. The Christian revelation was by Jesus Christ. The knowledge of it was by the Holy Spirit. The perception of it by the Church was at the beginning by the interposed agency of an oral ministration under the Spirit's control. The truth is infallibly delivered, whatever the means of delivery which the Spirit, in the exercise of His prerogative, may elect to employ. Its infallibility depends, not upon the organ of its delivery, but upon the authority of Him Who uses any organ as an instrumentality. Men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and the Word of God was conveyed with unerring accuracy and spiritual power to those who heard it gladly. The *depositum* of essential truth was germinally complete and sufficient to the immediate wants of the Church, independently of any other instrumentality whatsoever. The Holy Spirit had fulfilled the promise of our Lord. The Church had received the unction from above, and knew all things implicitly at least, as she would know them explicitly so soon as the Spirit should minister profounder instruction in the schools of heresy and persecution; knew all things, not as if she had become omniscient, but by apprehending and teaching the facts and truths of the Gospel, in all their harmony and interdependency, as the means of salvation. Revelation was an accomplished fact, rotund and perfect, and the Church was *ecclesia docens* before a page of the New Testament had been written.

The influence of the Holy Spirit of Pentecost, as it was brought to bear upon the ministry of the nascent Church, was a peculiar influence, because it had reference to special ends. The delivery of the Word of God without error necessitated a degree of superintendence or guidance correspondingly exact. Without any violence done to their individuality or freedom, the chosen organs of the Spirit

were *controlled* men. They were willing instruments for the furtherance of the Gospel. To their experimental knowledge of its objective contents was added a confirmation in their own souls of its spiritual reality. As the radiant light of Pentecost dawned upon them, all the irresolution, obtuseness and unbelief that had taxed the patience of their Master evaporated, and they rejoiced in new conceptions of the truth and new experiences of its power. Free, yet controlled, they announced divine truths in purely human speech. "Endued with power from on high," they remembered all things whatsoever the Lord had said unto them, especially those sayings of the forty days that preceded His Ascension,¹ which "contain within them the germ of everything most precious to Christians in knowledge, privilege and comfort."² They were so directed and inspired that when they spoke, they spoke "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth."³ The Spirit Who taught them influenced them to teach the Church the contents of revelation in all its essential outlines with infallible accuracy.

Of the nature and extent of this influence we know but little. As we have already seen, the mode of the Spirit's psychological contact with the mind is a mystery. It was a special gift—possibly in kind, possibly only in degree—and its exercise in relation to oral teaching was temporary, because the exigency which required it was transient. Of its existence we have no reason, *a priori*, or *a posteriori*, to entertain a doubt. The ecumenical mind of the Church has always recognized it as a sure-guiding superintendence, but has steadily declined to construct a theory of it. The

¹ St. Matt. xxviii. 9, 10, 16, 20 ; St. Mark xvi. 14-18; St. Luke xxiv. 36-49; St. John xx. 14-23, and 26-29; St. John xxi. 15-22.

² Bishop Moberley.

³ 1 Cor. ii. 13.

reality of an influence, suited to secure a given result, follows from the solemn guarantee of our Lord that the Spirit should teach the Church all things. That real influence is known, in theological *parlance*, as "Inspiration"—a term which represents quite as much what we do not know as what we do know. The co-existence of a divine and a human element, each working freely, and, it may be, each with different, though not contradictory motive, is recognized, and must be, unless we would fall into error. The tremendous philippic of Coleridge against the "*Divina commedia* of a superhuman ventriloquist"¹ was directed against a *theory* of inspiration which eliminated the free human element and made of it a mere harp in the hand of a harper. On the other hand, this one-sidedness, which exalts the divine at the expense of the human, has produced a later extreme which would dismiss the Holy Spirit from the scene, and reduce the Scriptures to a humanistic basis. The problem of the harmonious co-operation of the divine and human, each working freely, is not peculiar to the subject. The difficulty emerges everywhere. It is enough for one who recognizes the lordship of the Head of the Church to know that by His promised Spirit He will choose His Own *modus agendi*, and that it will be the wisest way. There is danger in being wise above what is written. A self-sufficient spirit is the pedagogue to doubt and unbelief.²

But the special influence of the Holy Spirit upon those who were chosen to deliver truth was but one step toward the formation of the Catholic Faith. Doctrine delivered

¹ "Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit." Coleridge's Works, Harper's edit., vol. V., pp. 592, 593.

² "Individual writers may have speculated; imagery, suitable or unsuitable, may have been introduced as illustrative by a few thinkers in early ages; but the Catholic Church has never put forward a theory.

must be *received*. The infallible teaching must be supplemented by the influence of the same Spirit upon the mind of the whole Church. As a special influence had secured delivery, a special influence secured perception and reception. Catholic Dogma began to exist because the Catholic Church, whose sole prerogative it is, began to perceive it. Then, in the very nature of the case, the Church's perception of the Body of Doctrine thus taught at once assumed definite expression in language, which would soon crystallize into "a form of sound words." The baptismal formula commanded by our Lord contained in itself the germs of all subsequent symbolism—a fact which there is good reason to believe early suggested itself to the Church. As the "Our Father" was the germ-cell of liturgical worship, this formula of the new-birth was the model of further formulations of doctrine. The truths which were necessary to produce the conversion of sinners to God; to unite converts with the Body of Christ; to secure to them the forgiveness of sin; to convey to them the Holy Ghost; to sustain them in the divine life, and to restore

On this subject she has always maintained a solemn reserve; she declares to us that in the Scripture the Holy Spirit speaks to us by the mouths of men; she permits us to recognize a divine and a human element; but, in reference to the nature, extent and special circumstances of the union, she warns us not to seek to be wise above what has been written, not to endanger our faith with speculations and conjectures about that which has not been revealed. Theories of inspiration are what scepticism is ever craving for; it is the voice of hapless unbelief that is ever loudest in its call for explanation of the manner of the assumed union of the divine with the human, or of the proportions in which each element is to be admitted and recognized. Such explanations have not been vouchsafed, and it is as vain and unbecoming to demand them as it is to require a theory of the union of the Divinity and Humanity in the Person of Christ, or an estimate of the proportions in which the two Natures are to be conceived to co-exist."

'Aids to Faith." Essay IX., pp. 473, 474.

them when lapsed ; and, indeed, all the essential truths of the Gospel, demonstrated, expounded, illustrated, and enforced by the burning zeal and intellectual power of inspired teachers, teaching orally, found a sacred place in the heart of the Church and an intelligible form in its mind.¹

From all this it is evident that Christianity was, primarily, an oral revelation. The writings contained in our New Testament were not yet in existence. That God Who, in time past, spake unto the fathers by the prophets, hath spoken in these last days by His Son,² and this independence upon documentary records continued during the first contact of the teaching Spirit with the chosen subjects of His inspiration. There are urgent reasons why this palpable fact should be kept in mind. Jewish bibliolatry has its parallel in our day, and this excess has engendered, by its unreasonableness, much of the doubt and uncertainty which exist among Christian people. It has represented the Bible as being itself the Christian revelation, inspiration as a gift having exclusive reference to its composition, and the Church as founded upon it ; whereas the Church was in existence, with all its instrumentalities, in successful operation ; and, moreover, the Holy Spirit had delivered the substantial elements of revealed truth, and the Church had received and believed these, anterior to the production of a single roll of sacred writing by the hand of an inspired penman.

A calm survey of the history of the first age is the sufficient corrective of these errors, which really discredit the written Word while seeking to magnify and honor it.

¹ See evidence of early formulas of doctrine in Blunt, "Dictionary of Doctrinal and Historical Theology," Art. "Creeds."

² Hebrews i. 1.

CHAPTER X.

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES—THEIR RELATION TO THE SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH.

THE opening chapter of the history of our religion has revealed to our view "the Lord and Giver of life" engaged in teaching an ecumenical faith and impressing it upon the ecumenical mind of the Church by the primary use of the oral ministrations of the apostolic ministry—holy men of old speaking as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. But a change was to take place. The Spirit in selecting this as His first method did not thereby forestall Himself from employing other means. All the teachings which we find in the Gospels and in the more didactic portions of the New Testament were indeed taught by the mouths of apostles and prophets before they were committed to writing, but He Who inspired men to speak, could also inspire them to write whenever He should determine to do so for the furtherance of His holy mission. It was not a novelty in the relation of God to the Church that He should cause messages that had been delivered orally to be reduced to writing. It was to be anticipated that He would do so again, a like necessity arising. Our Lord seemed to prepare the way by Himself drawing from the fountains of the Old Testament. Even after His resurrection He rebuked His foolish disciples, "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken," "and beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."¹

¹ St. Luke xxiv. 25-27.

And St. Peter, in the first sermon which was preached after the Pentecostal effusion, immediately referred his hearers to "that which was spoken by the prophet Joel," as recorded in their Old Testament.¹

Having committed the deposit of truth to the custody of the Church's sanctified intelligence by the agency of holy men speaking as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, how was this sacred treasure to be retained in her possession, preserved in its integrity, and handed down purely to all the coming generations? There are, it would seem, four conceivable methods of procedure by which the Author of truth might have accomplished His purpose.

First.—He might have immortalized the oral agents. But although the agency of inspired speech, as a means of contact with the *ecclesiastica intelligentia*, was antecedent to any other, it is evident that it was not intended to be the permanent means of authoritative teaching. The peculiar gift which insured an infallible delivery of truth was confined to its first subjects, and these were mortal men. The common lot was theirs, and ere the century elapsed all of the Apostles, and probably all others of the original ministry, had passed hence. Through the laying on of their hands others were to succeed them, by divine arrangement, in order that certain of their functions might be perpetuated to the end of the dispensation, but not to inherit that special gift, which was a temporary one.

Second.—He might have extended the special gift of inspiration in such extent as to constitute it an individual endowment perpetuated throughout all history.

Third.—He might have committed the truth to the ordinary process of tradition, by which history is handed down from one generation to another among peoples who are without written records. But this expedient would

¹ Acts ii. 16; Joel ii. 28-32.

have been attended with two fatal difficulties : 1. The impossibility of keeping the original tradition separate from the natural processes of the mind, with its strong powers of imagination, the fallibility of its mnemonic faculty, and its tendency to exaggerate or minimize, as self-interest may dictate. This difficulty exists even in regard to the operations of the Holy Spirit in the individual soul. While there may be a peaceful consciousness of the indwelling of the Dove, there cannot be such a specific apprehension of His influence as that one shall be able to distinguish without error or confusion that which is natural and that which is supernatural ; that which is from within, and that which is from above. An external criterion has been found necessary to guard the individual from error and fanaticism. The necessity would have been even greater in this instance, lest the pure tradition of the first age should speedily have become a mass of incredible myths. 2. The impossibility of preserving a harmonious tradition. The idea of the Church differs from that of natural religion. Segregation is the tendency in nature, but the Church is an inclusion of diversities unto harmonization. Thus St. Paul says, "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body ; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, * * * and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."¹ Then follows that graphic illustration of the foot, the hand, the ear, and the eye, in which he shows how these parts, with their proper functions, are necessary each to the other, and how God hath tempered the comely and uncomely parts together that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another. The turbulent annals of religious controversy testify the persistence with which

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.

the human element in the Mystical Body has resisted the strivings of the Divine, till the pure gold of charity has become dim and the most fine gold changed. Had it not been for the dominant presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church, the truth would long since have been buried beneath the contentions of the schools and the corruptions of philosophy falsely so-called. Much more rapid and disastrous would have been the encroachment of error and the destruction of unity had the primitive body of truth been left to the uncertainty of an uncontrolled natural tradition.

Fourth.—He might have exerted a strong superintendence over the mind of the Church upon which He had already impressed the truth, so as to preserve and perpetuate it in its purity, and, for an external help and corroboration, especially in the ages to come after the inspired ministry had ceased to speak, caused the substance of it to be reduced to writing by agents selected for the duty and guided in its discharge. Thus the stream of tradition, of which St. Paul makes mention,¹ the product equally of an inspired ministry orally delivering, and of an inspired Church receiving, would flow purely through the generations, the Lord caring for His Own truth.² And this was the method which our Lord actually selected as the means by which to perpetuate the original deposit.

Hence the writings which constitute our New Testament were called into being as one of the means of the Spirit.

The guiding control exercised by the Holy Spirit upon the inspired writers, identical as to its mode, nature and extent with that which was employed when they acted as oral teachers, was equally consistent with their free indi-

¹ 2 Thess. ii. 15, and iii. 6.

² "In strictness of speech Scripture is Tradition, written Tradition."
—Bishop John Kaye, "Ecclesiastical History," p. 299.

viduality; and this is evident in the perfectly natural and immediate character of the motive which consciously impelled them to write. Thus St. Matthew wrote with particular reference to the prejudices of his own countrymen; St. Mark probably at the suggestion of St. Peter; St. Luke for the enlightenment of his friend Theophilus, and St. John near the close of the first century, to supplement the other Gospels. Local and personal reasons gave rise to the Epistles and the Apocalypse. More extended was the vision and larger the motive of the all-animating and holy Spirit of wisdom, Who looked beyond the immediate exigency, and, in order to perpetuate the substance of the apostolic teachings to the Church of the coming ages by some outward record of that which He would keep perpetually fresh in the interior mind of the Church, provided that, while the writers were acting without compulsion, His gift of inspiration should stereotype those teachings and commit the plates to the Church, which was to be their Witness and Keeper, and, by His inward illumination, their Interpreter.

These several writings, coming into existence one by one, became the property of the Church. Into her hands they were received; by her custody they were preserved; in her light they were interpreted, and afterwards, in the fourth century, by her discriminating insight, they were separated from the uninspired Christian literature. They did not rise like a creative power upon a scene of chaos to call her into existence, to determine her doctrine, to dictate her polity, to issue her commission, or to adjudicate her controversies; but rather they supervened upon a completely systematized order, and could do no more than mingle their supplementary influence with the fully-developed life of the universal Church. Oral instruction had, in the necessity of things, given rise to a body of doc-

trine, of the existence of which the writings furnish numerous intimations.¹ As this was handed from one to another it beame a sacred tradition, circulating through the Church as a divinely taught *depositum*. To this the writings were added, not as superior, but as subsidiary to it. It was the Faith taught by men who spake by the Holy Ghost, and perceived by the Church through the same Spirit. Hence the Scriptures were not for verifying the tradition; on the contrary, the tradition was the only means by which the Church could verify the Scriptures. Prior in point of time and more ample in point of volume, it necessarily became the criterion by which the Scriptures were judged.

As this mass of writings was addressed to the divinely-organized Body of Christ, which was one, and which was designed to remain one for all time, it was not essential to its integrity as a series of inspired papers—historical, doctrinal and prophetical—that it should contain, as a constitution, every feature of the Church's life in minute detail. The Church's life was rather a constitution to it, so that its silences, its incidental allusions, its apparent discrepancies, its incomplete presentations of particular subjects, were divested of any inconvenience by the practical expedient of immediate reference to the actual belief or practice of the Church, just as one might fill up the details of a contemporaneous history of our country by drawing from the abounding sources of information around us.

It would have been an absurd if it had been a possible thing for a convert to have rejected the Apostles' fellowship because the Scriptures to which he had access were not of the nature of a detailed constitution on the subject; or, for still another to deny their inspiration because they

¹ Rom. vi. 17; 2 St. Peter ii. 21; St. Jude iii.; 2 Tim. i. 13, 14; 2 Tim. ii.; 1 Tim. vi. 20; 2 St. John vi. 7, 9.

did not claim it; or, for some literalist to protest against the incorporation of little children into the Body of Christ because only inferential authority could be found in any of the parchments or rolls that were circulating through the churches; or, for another to reject the representative priesthood because no writer had given the title to the ministry directly, and but one indirectly¹; or, for another to adhere to the Jewish Sabbath because the writings contained no record of any abrogation thereof; or, for some priest to refuse to communicate women at the weekly Breaking of Bread because nothing had been written on the subject; or, for any one to isolate the Scriptures from their proper surroundings, and then constitute them the one only, final, and exclusive criterion of truth. It would have been an absurdity; it is as absurd now. For the Holy Spirit did not bestow the sacred writings upon the Church to take the place of that revealed system of truth and practice which He had just consolidated, but rather to supply to Himself a means by which He might guide the Church in her fuller perception of the truth, and supply to her an inspired remembrancer in the coming days when the voice of a living inspired ministry was to be heard no longer. The writings take the Church and its developed system—its faith, its polity, its customs, its genius—for granted, and they can be correctly interpreted only in the light of this truth. Containing the substance of revelation to such an extent that only that should be regarded as essential which “may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture,”² as read in the light of history and the Church, they do not contain all the details of essential truth. The consequence is apparent. We must throw upon these also the illuminating light which flows from the Seven Lamps

¹ Rom. xv. 16, ministering—*ἰεροουργοῦντα*.

² “Articles of Religion,” Art. viii.

of the Spirit¹ burning in the Church. There is no longer any access to a living oracle, an inspired organ of infallibility, such as the apostolic ministry was; but much still continues among us which passed from the organs of delivery in the first age to the custody of the Church, and became a fixed portion of its heritage to all the future. Bearing the stamp of the ecumenical mind impressed upon it by the Holy Spirit, it should be recognized with gratitude, and should be employed as a means whereby the individual reader may understand the holy writings. To neglect or refuse this guidance is to fall into error and to take the shortest path to separatism. There were such persons at the first. In the general epistles of St. John we read of some who would not remain faithful to the truth "which ye have heard from the beginning."² "They went out from us." It was the natural consequence of rejection of the apostolic doctrine that the apostolic fellowship should be renounced. In the same passage the venerable Apostle illustrates the relation of his inspired writings to the Church when he says: "I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it."³ The Scriptures were for reminder and confirmation in re-

¹ The Holy Spirit "is represented under the emblem of lamps burning before the Mercy-Seat or throne, on account of that spiritual and saving illumination which He affords unto the Church. All the rays of supernatural light with which she has been favored were from the Spirit. 'Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Spirit.' The same adorable Person, acting as the Spirit of inspiration, guided the pens of those whom He employed to commit the revelation of the mind of God unto writing. He also continues by His influence and operation as the Spirit of truth, to open up and expound to the minds of the saints [the collective Church] those things which the inspired penman had written."—The Rev. Robert Culbertson: *Lectures on the Book of Revelation*, vol. ii., p. 34. Edinburgh, 1826.

² 1 St. John ii. 7.

³ 1 St. John ii. 21.

spect of that which was already in the custody and knowledge of the Church.

The Church and the Book must not be separated. They supplement and interpenetrate each other as ordained of God to perpetuate the Gospel and diffuse its blessings. But the statement thus made is incomplete until we add the thought to which our subject constantly leads us. Neither the Church nor the Book are competent to secure these benign spiritual results, except the Holy Spirit charge them with His vital force and employ them under the sublime purposes of His mission as means of imparting life and knowledge. He Who bestowed an influence upon the agents of an oral inspiration continued it when they acted in their capacity as authors of the sacred writings, but He has also endowed the whole body of the Church with an influence by which there has been developed a common and unanimous perception of the truth. Thus Catholic Dogma comes to have the *imprimatur* of universal acceptance, and, being a real product of the influence of the Holy Ghost (which, if we choose, we may call "inspiration") as truly as the oral or written teachings of the primitive ministry, deduced from and representing these as means which the Holy Spirit used to that end, is binding upon the conscience of all who loyally recognize the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ in the realm of revealed truth.

To the Book belongs a high place of honor. "The Bible is the diamond that sparkles on the bosom of the Church." Its relations to the faith are unspeakably important. Of its devotional value, of its supernatural power as a ministrant to sinning and sorrowing humanity in all the exigencies of life, of its influence upon the intellectual life of the world, whole libraries have been written. Our subject, however, confines our attention to its relation to the dogmatic faith. Because written under the authority of the

one Lord, by the inspiration of the one Spirit, it contains the one Faith of the Church. That unity shines out in every book and chapter of it. The central thoughts dominate throughout. As has been strikingly said, "it is as a Gothic temple, in which even the apparent caprices of architecture and ornamentation constitute, in connection with the whole, one beauty more. And the form of the Cross is everywhere to be traced. But at the same time the value of the different parts is determined by the relation of each one to the central thought of the whole."¹

¹ Van Osterzee: "Dogmatics," p. 169.

CHAPTER XI.

*INFALLIBLE PERCEPTION OF TRUTH NOT THE
ENDOWMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL.*

RECOGNIZING the imperial position of our Lord Jesus Christ within the realm of supernatural revelation, we are led on to perceive that He discharges His prophetic function through the vicariate of the Holy Ghost, and that the Holy Ghost impresses the essential contents of revelation upon the mind of the Church by various agencies, but chiefly by an inspired oral ministration, and an inspired record of the substance of that ministration; and, further, that the ultimate test of the infallibility of all agencies is that ecumenicity of perception and acknowledgment, which is also the gift of the Holy Ghost to the Body of Christ. Led by these statements of method, we no sooner make search for that which would inevitably be their outcome than we discover the existence of a Body of Catholic Dogma whose universal acceptance is an acknowledged fact. Now, this undisputed fact challenges the mind to inquire how these dogmas, standing out like huge sunlit promontories to the gaze of all who will open their eyes upon their splendor, could have gained their hold without some interposition of Divine Power. What means this giant consent, whose long arms so cleanly sweep into its motherly bosom all the various types of Christian life, all the rarest fruits of character, all the varieties of mankind, ethnic and intellectual, and even all the contentious saints of the later Ebal and Gerizim, but that this is, indeed, the

divinely chosen and guided method by which the Church may *know*, with moral unanimity, the things which are most surely believed among us? It was this supreme fact of "one faith" which impressed the mind of Irenæus¹ with its magnificence. It was this same fact which led Tertullian² to say: "Suppose that all churches had erred; that the apostle was deceived in giving his testimony; that the Holy Spirit, Who for this very thing, was sent by Christ, sought from the Father to be the teacher of truth, regarded no church so as to lead it into the truth; that the Steward of God, the Vicar of Christ, neglected His office, permitting the churches to understand and to believe differently from what He Himself had preached by the Apostles—is it probable (*verisimile*) that so many and so great churches would have stumbled into *one faith*?"

There is but one door of escape from so absurd a conclusion. It opens upon those counsels of infinite wisdom whereby our Lord, Who is the Head of the Body, purposes to make no schism in the Body by preferring one member above another, but contemplates them as existing in a majestic unity, so that each individual may perceive the faith with positive assurance of certainty by ascertaining and accepting the perceptions of the Corporate Whole.

1 "The Church disseminated over all the world, having received this preaching and this faith, preserves it diligently, as the inhabitants of the same house believe them alike, as having the same soul and heart, and teach and preach and deliver them alike, as having the same mouth; for, though their languages are unlike, the virtue of tradition is one and the same, and neither do the churches which are founded in Germany believe or deliver otherwise than those which were constituted in Spain, in France, in the Orient, in Egypt, in Africa, in the middle of the world; but as one and the same sun shines through the whole world, so does the light and preaching of the truth, in every place, where it is received, disperse itself."—Irenæus, lib i., cap. 3.

² Tertullian, De Præscript. Hæret. c. 27, 28.

Both within and without the pale of our holy religion, however, there are to be found many who are not willing to accept the induction of Irenæus and Tertullian's conclusion. Truth is an uncompromising antagonist, and must, in turn, meet the challenge of sturdy foes.

In noticing these adverse claims, we shall first consider the assertion, which in our age more clamorously than ever is put forth, to the effect that there resides in each individual a competency to perceive truth with sufficient distinctness, and that there is no necessity for any tribunal of infallible delivery.

Such is practically the rationalist's claim. With self-sufficient egotism he announces that every man, every son of nature, carries truth, like a star, in his brain.¹ The assumption is that it is competent for a single created mind to comprehend truth in all its infinite ramifications—a proposition as irreverent as it is impracticable. Philosophy, viewed as an attempt to formulate a science of all things, simply expresses the vain aspiration of the human mind to be as God, omniscient; and some of the saddest episodes in the history of modern thought have exhibited the penalties which await so arrogant an ambition. Intellectual audacity wins admirers, however, while its day lasts; and it is to be feared that the oracular tone of such sages as that one who said: "Once leave your own knowledge of God, your own sentiments, and take secondary knowledge * * * and you get wider from God every year this secondary form lasts,"² meets a sympathetic echo from many Christians, who, through an exaggerated estimate placed upon the assumed rights of individual judgment, have contracted grossly incorrect notions of its scope and jurisdiction. For this right—which is rather, under proper restrictions, a duty—by no means implies the right to throw

¹ Alger: "Hist. Doct. Future Life." Preface, p. ii. ² Emerson.

one's self back into a state of Cartesian doubtfulness of everything, in order that the mind may rise by processes of mathematical demonstration to the perception of the truth. It is impossible for any individual thus to become a law to himself. Des Cartes failed, the Cartesians failed, all the philosophers fail to accomplish it. Even the proposition that $2 + 2 = 4$ requires the mind to accept testimony external to itself. The ultimate authority before which we must bow is not lodged in any single brain or heart. Had it been otherwise, we should long since have discovered and prostrated ourselves before it. No such enthroned autocrat exists. Even in the order of nature we are all members one of another, so interrelated and bound together in a social unity, that separated individual discovery of truth is impossible ; and hence attempts at independence appear unreasonable, if not ridiculous. For he who assumes an individual solitary search for truth seems much to resemble the little pipe hid away among the registers of a magnificent organ which utters its thin, petty, whistling note, as if to represent the orchestral harmony of the full instrument. The actual results of this individualism in acquiring truth are enough to condemn the method. As when many little pipes mingle their independent notes in one confused jargon of discords, so we find among us the most chaotic diversity of opinions, the weary strife of wrangling schools, and endless Babel confusion, with no deficiency of mutual anathema. The tired world longs for some harmonizing authority, but does not seem to see the Master sitting at the key-board ready to bring out the music of each pipe by weaving its note into the harmony of the whole organ.

But is there, *within* the pale of the supernatural kingdom of heaven, any prerogative of individual infallibility That our Lord Who, during His earthly ministry, had been the

fountain of authoritative teaching, and had, for reasons of divine expediency, departed from visible association with His Church, that in it He might inaugurate the methods and means of the Holy Spirit, not so conspicuous to the senses, but more efficacious in reaching the wide realm of catholicity; that He should immediately proceed to qualify each individual, or any one individual to perceive the truth infallibly, would not only seem to be incongruous with the avowed purpose of His withdrawal, but would seem to argue that the mission of the Spirit and the institution of an *Ecclesia Docens* were superfluous.¹ Moreover, the results are against the theory; for every error recorded in history, every fanatical extravagance, every schism has been due to a reliance on inward illumination without the stay and guidance of divinely-provided external testimony. The pretensions of the individual, whether he be the Mystic, the Illuminist, or the Infallibilist (pope or private interpreter of the Scriptures), must therefore be excluded, Away with dreams, opinions, guesses, intuitions, oracles. decrees *ex cathedra*! The more urgently they claim to speak with authority, the more explicitly must we dismiss them from the scene, nor welcome their return until they

1 “ ‘Keep (quoth he, St. Paul to Timothy) the *depositum*.’ What is meant by this *depositum*?—that is, that which is committed to thee, not that which is invented of thee; that which thou hast received, not that which thou hast devised; a thing not of wit, but of learning; not of private assumption, but of public tradition; a thing brought to thee, not brought forth of thee; wherein thou must not be an author, but a keeper; not a founder, but an observer; not a leader, but a follower. *Keep the depositum*, quoth he. Preserve the talent of the Catholic Faith safe and undiminished; that which is committed to thee, let that remain with thee, and that deliver. Thou hast received gold, render them gold; I will not have one thing for another; I will not have thee for gold render either impudently lead, or craftily brass: I will not the show, but the very nature of gold itself.”—St. Vincent of Lerins. *Commonitorium* I. xxii.

have bowed submissively to the Corporate Unity under the compulsion of that all-embracing force, or archetypal principle of Pentecost, "and all that believed were together and had all things common."¹ In one word, the gift of inspiration is not individual. There is, indeed, a kind of influence, such as is mentioned in the Collect for the fifth Sunday after Easter, where we pray: "Grant to us Thy holy inspiration, that we may think those things that are good, and by Thy merciful guiding may perform the same." But manifestly this has no reference to the infallible acquisition of dogmatic knowledge. It has an ethical, rather than doctrinal bearing.

And yet, in deprecating the assumptions of individualism, we must disclaim the remotest intention of casting any discredit upon the relations of the Holy Spirit to the individual soul. Inconceivably great are the privileges which He confers upon the Christian; whose body is His temple; whose prayers are His intercessions; whose sanctity is the token of His beautifying power; whose hope is in His promise; but by no possible latitude of construction can these blessings and honors be interpreted as constituting him an infallible organ to whom truth is revealed, and by whom it may be dogmatically announced. Is it not passing strange how often the noblest minds have failed to perceive that it is one thing to be the subject of the sacramental and other ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit, and another thing to become the organ of His plenary teaching? What utter confusion of thought is involved in these words of a late Scotch Bishop, whose lovely life and death almost sanctify the mists and clouds of his theology: "What we want above all," he says, "is this, that men who are alive to the progress of the age, who, in the hidden retirement of their lives, are walking with God in the newness of the present

¹ Acts ii. 44.

light, would simply tell us what they have seen and heard. We do not want the fancies of ambitious writers; we do not want the repetition of old *formulae*; but could not some organization be formed by means of which we could ascertain the experiences of trained watchers in the realm of the spirit? We are journeying, no doubt, on one great highway, but there is a path which each one treads for himself alone. What has any one really found there—any one who has been endeavoring to follow the living Christ—and who has not merely been looking back to the light of other days? ‘Watchman! what of the night?’”¹ This almost pathetic cry for an “organization” comes from a chief minister of that divine organism which is just the means by which we may ascertain the experiences of trained watchers in the realm of the spirit! and he who wants no more repetition of old *formulae* is ready to hail as light from heaven the illumination that bursts upon any lonely traveler lost in the mazes of speculation, or wandering in the moonlit regions of sentiment! It is a question worth considering why a fatuity so striking should sweep like a contagion through the world, paralyzing faith and destroying humility. It is not difficult to perceive that there should rise a rebellion of mind and heart against doctrines and opinions which, in the near past, have been proclaimed as true with misguided zeal, mounting at times to the height of intolerant bigotry, and even enshrined in local formularies in close union with eternal truths, but which have been wholly devoid of claim upon the conscience of the Catholic Church. But the marvel is that minds which are so alert to perceive the defect of these claims, and so brilliant in their exposure of it, should reject the results of one form of individualism only to substitute in its place

¹ “Life of Alexander Ewing, D.C.L., late Bishop of Argyll and the Isles.” London, 1879. P. 435.

another form quite as likely to go astray and misrepresent the truth. There is doubtless a fascination to many minds in making original searches for truth, but it is certainly inconsistent with the modesty of the true theologian ; and, moreover, observation among this class of thinkers confirms the suspicion that, rejecting the principle of authority in one direction, they do at once accept its rule in another without protest, seemingly jealous of the principle only when it puts upon them the duty of implicitly accepting Catholic truth. It is at all times likely to occur that spiritual inactivity shall set in, as custom robs truth of a certain glamor, and then new error becomes more attractive than old truth. The quietism of Molinos gained its adherents in Rome, not so much because of its intrinsic attractiveness as because religious sloth had robbed the old truths of their beauty and sacraments of their grace.

Individual thought, study and investigation are rights not to be gainsayed. The doctors of the Church are her crown of rejoicing. It has not infrequently occurred that an individual has perceived and formulated a truth in such perfection of statement that the whole Church recognized and adopted it as expressing a component part of the Faith ; but the particular degree of illumination vouchsafed to an exceptionally great mind, and pure heart, and firm will, establishes no rule by which the divine contact with individuals is governed ; nor, indeed, does any authority dwell in the single voice that may haply express the truth. The happy utterance may have fallen from the lips of an individual, but the authority dwells rather in the consentient voice of the whole Church, upon whose consciousness, sensitized by the Holy Spirit, the statement photographs itself as very truth. It must not be forgotten for a moment by those who desire to contract and cherish clear views, that the divine thought seems to be to endow

men only with those qualifications which are essential to the discharge of their particular duties and the accomplishment of their personal salvation ; and so seldom does an Athanasius arise, that we are forced to conclude the ordinary illumination of those who are in union with the Body of Christ to be limited to the individual rather than the collective necessities.

This error, in regard to the competency of the individual, is a seed than which no other produces a harvest so speedy and so deplorable. It has not only developed an insufferable egotism, rising sometimes to the height of a spiritual pride that crushes Christian humility under its heel, but it has been the source in every age of schism and heresy. Its logical result is as many beliefs as there are minds to mistake their opinions for inspirations. The curse of Separatism—the scandal of Christendom, as it is the occasion of unbelief—is even more widespread and disastrous to-day than it was two hundred years ago when Bishop Beveridge wrote : “Hence these tears ; hence so many horrible schisms in the Church ! For, while individuals indulging beyond what is meet, their abilities, or rather their own wanton fancies, devote themselves to the introduction of novelties into religion, all the people, through the infinite diversity of opinions, come to be rent into contrary schools and factions.”¹

¹ “Codex Canonum Eccles. Prim. Proemium.” Lib. Anglo-Cath. Theology. Works of Bishop Beveridge, vol. xi.

CHAPTER XII.

THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE INDIVIDUAL.

MAY not the individual believer, however, attain unerring results in the acquisition of Christian truth by his use of the inspired Scriptures?

There are special reasons in our own time, when a one-sided naturalistic spirit of criticism is conspiring with animal forms of ruthless unbelief to cast contempt on the Holy Book, why we should studiously avoid any depreciation of it. At the same time, there is reason to believe that some of the rough usage which it encounters is due to its having been assigned a place relatively to other essential things which the Spirit of inspiration did not design it to occupy. If this be the case, as we strongly think it is, then the best defence that can be offered in its behalf is to expose and acknowledge mistakes, and to indicate the position which properly belongs to it in the economy of the Holy Spirit. The sacred writings are worthy of our highest honor, but we do not honor them when we fail to perceive and accept with all its conclusions the palpable fact that at first, when the Church was already in existence and moving forward along her beneficent pathway, the Scriptures had not yet been called into being. They are the corona of gems that flashes upon the brow of the Church, but they are subordinate to the Church as it is to Christ.

The Scriptures do not possess an *ex opere operato* power to make infallible disclosure of the whole system of

revealed truth to any single mind. They constitute a priceless treasury of resources to the Christian in the direction of devotion, comfort, spiritual development and instruction. But that is not the point before us. As a criterion of all truth for the individual, they do not make the claim, nor give evidence that they possess the power, while the results which attend their attempted use as such demonstrate the futility and absurdity of it. It is not to the mind of the one but to the mind of the all that the full-orbed truth appears in perfect outline.

But what if an afflatus of the Holy Spirit accompany the single mind in its study of the Sacred Word? To concede the presumption, for a moment, the individual must still confront the impossibility of identifying the inward teaching of the Spirit as differentiated from the ordinary workings of the mind. The mystery that surrounds the operation of God in the soul is so great in all the gifts of the Spirit, whether ordinary or special, that even those who have made themselves willing recipients of His grace cannot distinguish between the natural process of their own minds and the supernatural inference that descends upon them. How perilous to attempt a task of discernment so delicate! The annals of religion testify, with terrible emphasis, the penalties of such mistaken zeal. Many an enthusiast, from Montanus down, has attributed his earth-born zeal or his sensuous ecstasies to the impulse of the Divine Spirit. Many a mystic, from the Areopagite down, has mistaken his dreamy emotions for visions of the unutterable. On the other hand, the very gifts of grace have sometimes afforded a basis for the deceitful heart on which to build the Babel of its pride. It has not infrequently been observed by those who readily discern spirits that Christians have grieved away the long-suffering "Lord and Giver of life" by regarding His sanctifying, illuminat-

ing, and comforting ministrations as nothing else than self-culture secured by the use of their natural powers. Perhaps this disposition to confuse the divine with the human is still more patent with respect to the perception of the writers of Revelation.

But neither can the individual mind identify in the Scriptures that factor of inspiration by which they are made the record of revelation. The influence of the Spirit upon the minds of the writers, whereby a trustworthy record of the facts and truths associated with the Incarnation was secured to the Church, was necessarily subject to limitations. As inspired organs of the Spirit they wrote as they were moved, being willing in the day of His power, but there is an entire lack of evidence to show that they were *conscious* of peculiar endowments by which they were assured against error, nor was such consciousness necessary to secure the results which were desired. "There is no reason to believe that the operation of the Spirit in inspiration revealed itself any more in the consciousness of the sacred writers than His operations in sanctification reveal themselves in the consciousness of the Christian. As the believer seems to himself to act, and in fact does act out his own nature, so the inspired penmen wrote out of the fullness of their own thoughts and feelings, and employed the language and modes of expression which were most natural and appropriate."¹ If the fact of their inspiration, then, was one of which they were unconscious, and if the writings themselves made no such announcement, it is apparent that it was not the purpose of the Holy Ghost to establish the sacred writings as His organ by which infallibly to guide the individual Christian into all truth. By what means, then, was the fact of their inspiration ascertained, and how did it come to be accepted, and how did we come to believe that the several

¹ "Systematic Theology," Charles Hodge, D.D., Vol. i. p. 157.

writings now contained in the canon are to be received as "inspired?" The reply at once suggested by our subject is that the Spirit Who has holy relations to every soul, and peculiar relations to those who are called to any special function and honor (as, for example, to become inspired penmen), has plenary relations only to the whole Body of Christ, and hence that which does not certify itself to the consciousness of the individual becomes apparent to the consciousness of the corporate unity. The sacred writings did not reach the Church through the magisterial act of some external authority. On the contrary, history records that the Church, under the guidance of a fine inward instinct, the product of the Spirit's prophetic power, discerned the character of the inspired writings, and bore witness to their value as documents of a revelation already in existence, which had been actually done and taught by our Lord Jesus Christ, and first delivered to her by oral ministrations; and, in obedience to her corporate perceptions, sifted those several and separate writings out of the mass of Christian literature, and collated them into one holy volume of which she is custodian and witness, and by which she ever loves to guide her steps under the ordering of the Holy Ghost.¹

The Scriptures were addressed to the Church, which holds them in her custody. The Spirit Who inspired men to write them was the only agent competent to interpret them, and this interpretation was impressed upon the mind of the Catholic Church, with the result of a Body of Catholic Dogma. Had the Scriptures been addressed to each individual, with the promise of infallible guidance in their interpretation, the same result would have been reached. But that such a promise was not vouchsafed to the individual is evident, for individual interpretation with-

¹ Hooker's Works, Vol. i. pp. 335, 375, Ed. Keble.

out Catholic guidance produces more contradictions than agreements. It is, after all, not the Scriptures but his interpretation of them which the individual follows. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Results constitute the supreme argument. The Spirit of God was not sent to inaugurate a dispensation of endless contradiction. What St. Vincent of Lerins wrote applies well in our day: "All men do not understand the Scripture in one and the same sense, but divers men diversely. This man and that man, this way and that way, expound and interpret the sayings thereof. So that, to one's thinking, so many men, so many opinions almost may be gathered out of them. For Novatian expoundeth it one way, Photinus another, Sabellius after this sort, Donatus after that; Arius, Eunomius, Macedonius will have this exposition—Apollinaris and Priscillian will have that; Jovinian, Pelagius, Celestius gather this sense; and, to conclude, Nestorius findeth out that; and therefore very necessary it is, for the avoiding of so great windings and turnings of errors so various, that the work of expounding the Prophets and Apostles shall be directed according to the rule of the ecclesiastical and Catholic sense."¹ That necessity exists to-day more urgently than ever before, more than in the anti-Nicene days, for never before has this error more persistently resisted universal truth, and more sadly illustrated the deliberation with which men, blind with the passions of the theological battle-field, have sacrificed unity and inflicted the curse of division upon Christianity. The story is a sad testimony to the earthiness of the vessels to whom so great treasure was committed. More deplorable still would the record be, did not the Spirit's work in the sanctification of the individual soul find freer course and larger opportunities. Even in the storms of controversy there has been exhibited

¹ Vincentius Lirinensis, *Commonitorium*, chap. I.

a singular unanimity in the enjoyment of the grace that pertains to the personal life in Christ. God is more deliberate in withdrawing than error in creeping in. Antagonists in the council or the synod become brethren at the Supper of the Lord. It has also been noticed that the fruits of the Spirit often survive in the life of those who, by the perversions of the intellect, no longer endure sound doctrine.

The document of our religion is the treasure of the Church, and its use by the individual, in his relation to the whole body of necessary truth revealed through the Logos, is a duty; but a duty to be discharged under the limitations which the Catholic Christian should love to honor and obey. It is entirely practicable to ascertain whether or not private beliefs regarding the substantial truths are identical with the mind of the Spirit, by comparing them with the teachings of the Book as revealed to, perceived, taught, formulated and maintained by the ecumenical mind of the Church. Then one may say with St. Paul, I have received the Spirit that is of God that I may know the things that are freely given to me of God.¹ But, we repeat it, he can know that his convictions are based upon the firm foundation of certitude only to the extent that they correspond with those eternal types of truth which Catholic Dogma presents to his lowly and teachable mind. And it is a deep marvel why he should desire any other system of truth than that which has been traced upon the intelligence of the Body by the light which flows from the intelligence of the Head.

¹ I Cor. ii. 12.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ROMAN PONTIFF NOT INFALLIBLE.

AMONG the many individuals who make the age resound with their pretensions, there is one voice heard, a louder and deeper note than the rest, clamorously appealing to be recognized as the very voice of God Himself. It is the voice of one who professes to possess a power, and to wield an authority, in the realm of truth, which no Apostle ever dared to claim, and who announces himself the perpetual organ of the Paraclete. We must speak of him as a man rather than as a Bishop, for it is not easily to be forgotten that in his decree at the Vatican Council, Pius held that it is not the Bishop of Rome, but "the Roman Pontiff" who "is possessed of that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be endowed for defining doctrine regarding faith and morals."¹ Although it is true that the title of pontifex was anciently applied to bishops, particularly to those in the greater sees, it is evident, in the preceding chapters of the decree, that the stupendous prerogative is claimed, not so much by virtue of the Pope's episcopal office, as because he is "the successor of blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles."

"The Roman Pontiff," said Cardinal Manning, "is distinct from the Episcopate, and is a distinct subject of infallibility, and in the exercise of his supreme doctrinal authority, or *magisterium*, he does not depend for the in-

¹ "First Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ," chap. iv.

fallibility of his definitions upon the consent or consultation of the Episcopate, but only on the divine assistance of the Holy Ghost."¹ Thus, through the assumption of an individual, rejecting all authority external to his own mind, our Lord's institution of the Episcopate is ignored, all Bishops are "subtilized to a bodiless shadow,"² or reduced to papal commissaries; and the primacy of an Apostle, which was at most a personal privilege rather than an official prerogative, and which, whatever its nature, was not committed to a succession in perpetuity, is made the basis upon which all historical Christianity must be reared, and the official deliverances³ of this Pontiff must be regarded as the infallible and irrevocable teaching of the Holy Ghost, being free from all blemish and error, not by virtue of any participation therein of any other mind, or any corporation of minds, although the universal Episcopate were included in the number, nor because of any antecedent perception or subsequent consent of the Church at large,⁴ but solely in consequent of the inherent and perpetual prerogative of the incumbent of an office which is held to be that which St. Peter first occupied as primate among the apostles.

The dagger-point of this error, which, if unopposed, would let out the life-blood of true Catholicity, and substi-

¹ Petri Privilegium, III. p. 113.

² Döllinger: Letter to the Archbishop of Munich and Freising, March 28, 1871.

³ I. The Roman pontiff, speaking *ex cathedra*, has a divine assistance which preserves him from error. II. He speaks *ex cathedra* when he speaks under these five conditions: (1) as supreme teacher; (2) to the whole Church; (3) defining a doctrine; (4) to be held by the whole Church; (5) in faith and morals. This is the substance of the doctrine.

⁴ "Ideoque ejusmodi Romani Pontificis definitiones ex sese, non autem ex consensu Ecclesiæ, irreformabilis esse." First Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ. Chapter iv.

tute a theocratic paganism in its stead, lies in its elevating an individual to a position which can be competently occupied by no other individual than the Incarnate God.

The amiable Pio Nono, firmly convinced of his personal infallibility when speaking *ex cathedra* to the Church concerning doctrine or morals, and believing himself to be in constant and special communication with the Holy Ghost, illustrated the Vatican dogma ; but his delusion also illustrated its falsity. It was a delusion which as to its essence was anticipated in the enthusiastic mysticism of Tauler and Bohm ; but a delusion more profound by a thousand degrees, seeing that his dogma required him to believe as explicitly in the infallibility of all his Petrine predecessors (including even those who taught essential heresy), as in his own.

The Vatican theory is a singular combination of Catholic truth and Protestant error. The well-known formula, "faith and morals," declares upon what subjects the pontifical decisions *ex cathedra* are infallible, and the term is defined to cover that *depositum* which was committed to the Church, as the revelation of the Divine truth and of the Divine law, the Church being the guardian and witness, the interpreter and the expositor of the truth and of the law, *i.e.*, of faith and morals. This is distinctly the Catholic position as far as it is a definition of faith and morals, old as Christianity itself, unchanged now because unchangeable, the way in which are to be discerned the stately step-pings of the Holy Ghost. But in the twinkling of an eye, the statement loses its sublimity, as an individual, a pontiff, steps forward and announces the competency of his private judgment to ascertain the truth of the *depositum*. He could not more accurately state the position of our self-sufficient "Bible Christians," so-called.

The Scriptural basis which the Pontiff alleges—though

with what consistency he appeals to any authority beyond himself does not appear—is the language which our Lord addressed to St. Peter, “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not, and, when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”¹ But the application of this promise to the line of Roman Pontiffs is not in accordance with the voice of antiquity. None of the fathers ever found infallibility in it, nor did the Church ever so believe. Döllinger’s challenge was fearless and has not been successfully answered: “I am ready to prove that this assertion is based upon an entire misconception of the traditions of the Church for the first thousand years and upon an entire distortion of her history. It is in direct contradiction to the plainest facts and testimonies.”

It was by force of necessity that the Pontiff announced himself independent of the *consensus Ecclesiæ*. For to have recognized the infallibility of universal judgments within the Body of Christ would have been fatal to his exclusive claim of supereminence. It was seemingly no more than an empty act of courtesy when Pius annexed the words “*sacro approbante concilio*” to his decrees. Had he submitted even to that slight extent to the *placet* of Catholic Christendom, an untterrified voice would have declined, and continued to decline to recognize the Holy Spirit in the Vatican Dogma. To say nothing of the negative attitude of other portions of the Church, it was reported that the Patriarch of Constantinople when declining an invitation to attend the council at the Vatican said to the representatives of the Roman Pontiff, among other things, that in Ecumenical Councils there is infallibility when they are in accordance with the Scriptures and apostolic tradition—a reply which not only denies the Roman pretension, but asserts the superiority of Catholic consent

¹ St. Luke xxii. 32.

over even a truly universal council. It was precisely upon this ground that the Councils of Constance and Basle asserted the superiority of an ecumenical council to the Pope.

Bishop Hefele, who was one of the strenuous minority in the Vatican Council, hardly took its edge from this error when he proposed this *via media*: "Is the Pope," he asked, "above or below the Church? Neither the one nor the other. The Pope is in the Church; he necessarily belongs to it; he is its head and its centre. The Church, like the human body, is an organized whole; and just as the head is not superior or inferior to the body, but forms a part of it, and is the principal part of it, so the Pope, who is the head of the Church, is not superior or inferior to it; he is therefore neither above nor below the general council." But to this and every other shade of opinion concerning this ambitious pretense, there is one all-sufficient reply: the Head of the body is not Primate Peter, nor his assumed successors. There is no Head but the Lord Christ, nor any official Primate but He; nor has He any Vicar upon the earth but the Paraclete, nor any organ other than His Body, the Spirit-bearing universal Church.

CHAPTER XIV.

INFALLIBILITY NOT RESIDENT IN ANY ORDER OR BODY OF MEN.

THE divine gift of inerrancy in the perception of dogma is not the privilege of any individual. But does not the Holy Ghost bestow it upon some particular body or class in the Church? Is there not a high estate of spiritual nobility to whom this honor comes as a special grace? As a part cannot equal the whole, the reply must be a negative one. The promise of the Spirit as the Way-Leader of the Church was made only to the whole Body. Although originally addressed to the Apostolic College collectively and individually, it was only because of their representative character, and because they antedated in time and outranked in dignity the other orders of the ministry. St. Paul plainly teaches us that "God hath set some in the Church : *first*, apostles ; secondarily, prophets,"¹ etc. But the promise made to them was really addressed to the universal Church.² At its birth, on the day of Pentecost,

¹ 1. Corinthians xii. 28.

² "Neither must we think that this Comforter was either promised, or else given, only to the Apostles, but also to the universal Church of Christ, dispersed throughout the whole world : for unless the Holy Ghost had been always present, governing and preserving the Church from the beginning, it could never have sustained so many and great brunts of affliction and persecution with so little damage as it hath ; and the words of Christ are most plain in this behalf, saying that 'the Spirit of truth should bide with them forever,' that 'he would be with them always (he meaneth by grace, virtue, and power), even to the world's end.'"—*Book of Homilies, Sermon on Whitsunday, Part II.*

when the first impact of the Spirit took place, the Church was identical and conterminous with the Eleven. The Spirit endowed them with plenary perceptive power, the crudity of their views was displaced by intelligent insight, and truth stood revealed to them in its ineffable beauty and perfect symmetry. The heart that had been slow was now alert to believe. The memory which had been dull now recalled every word and event of the past days with microscopic accuracy. But these new endowments were not bestowed upon them chiefly because of their official character. They had been apostles in the former days, when their minds were dull and their perceptions obscure. But at this distinct epoch, in the economy of the Holy Spirit, transitional and temporary as it was, they and they alone constituted the Spirit-bearing and Spirit-transmitting Body of Christ, and to them as such the promised guidance of the Spirit at first came.¹ When our Lord performed His miracle of feeding the multitudes, He first gave the articles of food to the disciples, and they delivered them to the people. In like manner the Apostles were made the recipients of the blessing that was to flow out into and fill the expanding Church. As soon as the Church, in the person of the Apostles, began to sow the seed of the divine truths of salvation by the Incarnation, she began to realize a spiritual harvest, and, by the agency of teaching and baptism, multitudes were garnered into the Church. Immediately that peculiar corporate indwelling of the truth-revealing Spirit which had been enjoyed by the Body numbering eleven persons became the possession of the Body numbering thousands, and as the Lord added daily to the Church "the saved," the blessing was extended to thousands more. It was only at the transitional point that the Apostles held

¹ *Vide* Bishop Moberley's Bampton Lecture, "Administration of the Spirit," p. 33.

in themselves the covenanted illumination of the Spirit, the promised guidance of the Ὁδηγός, as a reservoir at the foot of a mountain may contain the waters of the spring upon the mountain's side which are to flow out through this receptacle upon all the lands beneath. Henceforth they must share with the whole the capacity of perceiving truth, and look to the universal acceptance thereof as the sign and token of the divineness of their messages. The peculiar gift and influence which is termed inspiration, by which they were enabled to convey the contents of revelation in the use of oral and other means of communication, had primary reference to the delivery of the truth rather than to their conscious perception of it. The purpose of the gift was temporary,¹ and its possessors were mortal. The inspired teachers and writers did not survive the first century; but the Church, whose perceptions were refined and guided by the Holy Spirit so as to identify the truth thus delivered, and to formulate it more or less fully, was to endure throughout all generations as the Body of Christ, the Depository of the Fullness of the Spirit, the Keeper and Witness of the Faith, the Catholic Church, holding in her hands with steadfast fidelity the Holy Scriptures and the Catholic Dogmas.

¹ The Apostles had no successors in their inspired capacity. They were under the guiding "promise of the Father" to bear witness concerning the things which they had seen and heard (St. Luke xxiv. 48; St. John xv. 27), and to the discharge of this duty they only were competent. Other functions, as of government, sacramental ministration, and propagation, they were explicitly commanded to perpetuate by filling up their ranks as they might become depleted by death or apostasy. The apostolic succession, as a fact of history, began to be illustrated on the day of Pentecost by the selection of a successor to the traitor Judas. "We are able to count those who by the Apostles were appointed Bishops in the Churches, and their successors, to our own time."—*St. Irenæus*.

If the Apostolic College, contemplated separately from the whole body of the faithful on the earth, did not constitute a permanent organ of the Holy Ghost, it must, by parity of reasoning, be denied that the universal Episcopate, viewed as the perpetuated Apostolate, may claim the tremendous prerogative. This theory prevailed to a wide extent in the Roman communion¹ even in recent times, and has its advocates in our own, to whom it furnishes, illusively as we think, a refuge from uncertainty and a practicable basis of certitude. Cardinal Manning in his pre-Vatican book on the Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost² declared that the pastoral ministry, as a body, cannot err, because the Holy Spirit, Who is indissolubly united to the mystical body, is eminently and above all united to the hierarchy and body of its pastors; and that, united to its centre (the Pope), is in all ages divinely sustained and divinely assisted to perpetuate and enunciate the original revelation. The Pope left out, many Anglicans hold this view, but the claim is too exclusive: it practically makes the Church consist of one order of its ministry; and it was a merited fate that this order which, by the mouth of the Cardinal, so summarily consigned the whole body of the baptized to insignificance in the economy of the Church, should have to witness its own vaunted powers absorbed by the occupant of what is called the Chair of Peter on that ill-starred day when the Pope announced his official infallibility.

The proper function of the Episcopate may be stated

¹ "Verba quibus Christus ecclesiæ docenti inerrantiæ donum pollicitus est, spectant ad *corpus* seu ad collectionem episcoporum."—*Bailly, De Ecclesia*, p. 592. "Privilegium infallibilitatis non individuīs sed *corpori* episcoporum fuit promissum; ita omnes sentiunt."—*Bouvier, De Ecclesia*, p. 189.

² Page 91.

by affirmation and negation under three heads as follows :

First. The Episcopate is the instrument of the Church's *propagation* ; but not of her *illumination*.

Second. It is the fountain of *order* ; but not of *revelation*.

Third. It is the *faithful teacher* ; but not the *infallible guide*.

It has been endowed with solemn and holy relations to the Faith. It must co-operate with the Holy Ghost in proclaiming, defending, and spreading abroad the knowledge of the saving truths and grace-conveying institutes of the holy Gospel. It must rule, teach, guide, and discipline to the edifying of the Body of Christ, according to the integrity of the one Faith, and in the faithful discharge of its manifold functions, as well in evil as in good report, as fearlessly in ages of unbelief as in ages of faith, as tenderly as firmly, it will deserve and command the chief place of influence in the Church. But it were an act of rebellion against the Head of the Church, a sin against the Holy Ghost, and a violence down to the Mystical Body of Christ should the pre-eminence of office and authority which belongs to the Episcopate be made the pretended warrant for claiming a special illumination of the Spirit unto the infallible delivery of doctrine. A council which should actually be composed of the Episcopate in its solidarity, that is be numerically ecumenical, would undoubtedly be a fountain of light and truth, of order and beauty, to the Catholic Church, and we have no right to deny that it *might* formulate undogmatized verities so as to express the very mind of the Spirit, as councils including only a portion of the Episcopate have done.¹

¹ The West was represented at the Council of Nicea by only a few bishops and by none at those of Constantinople and Ephesus. At Chalcedon no Western Bishop except he of Rome was represented, and he only by his legates.

But as the Church hath no head save only the Lord Christ, and as the part cannot equal the whole in which alone resides the plenary presence of the Holy Spirit as teacher of truth, it were a very violent and quixotic assumption to contend that even such a council could possess inerrability in faith and morals, *per se*, although it might be presumed to enjoy supreme authority in matters of discipline. Such a body would receive distinguished consideration and exercise almost overpowering influence, while its declarations would have great weight with the Church. But its real test would lie in the judgment of the Church. "The final authority of proper ecumenical synods," says Palmer, "does not arise merely from the number of bishops assembled in them, but from the approbation of the Catholic Church throughout the world; which, having received their decrees, examined them with the respect due to so considerable an authority, compares them with Scripture and Catholic tradition, and by a universal approbation and execution of those decrees, pronounces a final and irrefragable sentence in their favor."¹

The numerical strength of a general council is not the test of its ecumenicity.

All of the ecumenical councils and many others of less note have vigorously maintained the Faith once delivered to the Saints, and their decrees have been like anchors cast into the deep to enable the Church to ride out the storms of heresy in safety. Indeed the great value and dignity of these bodies has acted like an enchantment upon the class of minds that are influenced by the naturalistic desire to find some visible organ of infallibility established in the world and has tempted them to misapprehend the place of councils in the economy of the Church. Because,

¹ "Treatise on the Church of Christ." Bishop Whittingham's edition, vol. ii. p. 145.

as in the case, for example, of Nice and Chacedon, the whole Church has borne witness that they did not err, many have concluded that they could not err. It was to meet this exaggerated estimate of their powers that the Anglican article ¹ was framed which declares that general councils may err and sometimes have erred in things pertaining to God ; which was simply saying, that, however worthy of veneration, they were not formally infallible. We know them to have made true and final statements of Christian dogma only as we know them to have been approved by that adequate authority which dwells in infinite plenitude in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, which is represented here on earth by the Holy Spirit, which certifies itself by His agency to the Mystical Body, and which finds final expression in the consciousness of the whole congregation of the faithful. Thus, when St. Gregory the Great declared that he received and venerated the Four Councils as he did the four books of the Holy Gospel, he proceeded to allege as his ground for doing so that they were “*universali constituta consensu.*”

The *imprimatur* of Catholic approval is the standing test of the ecumenicity of councils, and this was strikingly illustrated in the Council of Constance, which, having no “*servus servorum*” above it but the claims of three rivals for the Petrine Chair to arbitrate, distinctly sought for approval of its action by appealing to the whole body of its constituency, at which also Cardinal Cambray (Fenelon), supported by Chancellor Gerson, repeatedly announced that the privilege of inability to err in the faith belongs only to the universal Church. “The last mark,” said Bossuet,² “of any council or assembly’s representing truly the Catholic Church is when the whole body of the Episcopate and the whole society which professes to receive its

¹ Art. XXI.

² Quoted in “Palmer on the Church,” vol. II. p. 148.

instructions, approve and receive that council : this, I say, is the last seal of the authority of the council and the infallibility of its decrees."

The note of infallibility in the delivery of truth not inhering even in so majestic and thrice sacred a body as an Ecumenical Council, we have no reason for expecting to find it in diocesan, provincial, or national synods. Many of these have formulated error, and most of them have mingled local opinions or crude statements with the Catholic truths ; and at special times, when the powers of evil seem to have been permitted to run riot in the Church, as during the Arian controversy, these lesser synods have rallied with treasonable celerity on the side of the errorist. In later times, noted instances have occurred in which they seemed less earnest to proclaim Catholic truth than to effect compromises with insurgent forms of theological error. So much of their deliverances as are really and indubitably grounded in a Catholic Consensus must be accepted as conforming to the very truth ; but by what right may they put it upon the conscience to accept the totality of their decrees and articles as part of the Faith ? The true Catholic will prefer "ancient fidelity to new perfidy, old soberness to new madness, ancient light to new darkness ;"¹ and it was no other than this principle which finally rescued the Church from the tidal-wave of Arian heresy. "Well-nigh the whole world," proving false for a time, could not overcome the Faithful who, as St. Vincent says, "by preferring ancient truth before new error, were untouched with any spot of that infection."²

Of pretensions made on behalf of any particular body or class of persons that they enjoy the gift of perceiving truth without error, one other may be noticed. It is put forth by the advocates of an uncatholic theology, and forms

¹ St. Vincent of Lerins.

² "Commonitorium," ch. iv.

a logical and integral part of it. It is claimed that the Holy Ghost effects an inward revelation of the essential truths to "the true people of God,"¹ or "the elect;" that is to say, to those who, by the unconditional decree of God, have been chosen and called to a state of indefectible grace. The fatal defect of this theory is, that it is not possible for any individual to decide, with infallible certainty, that he has been selected to form one of such a company of celestial favorites, while it is equally impossible for him to ascertain in what fellowship of light or darkness his brethren may be. So uncertain a foundation must contribute its uncertainty to the whole superstructure. For the same reason, it would be impracticable to secure a consensus of the faith of "the true people of God." God only knows who they are, and has not revealed to us their names. We are satisfied to enjoy the charitable hope that all the baptized into Christ are also in a state of salvation (in which we pray God they may continue unto their lives' end), and that all of them share in the estimable benefit of that irreformable Body of Catholic Dogma which the Holy Ghost has revealed to the ecumenical mind of the Church. This seems to us to be a pathway to certitude and robustness of faith much more practicable to the mind that is palsied with doubt, and almost ready to exclaim: Is there a definite faith? than the way that conducts toward the infinite mystery of God's secret counsel in search of a census of "the elect," which probably has not yet been made up.

¹ "Systematic Theology," by Charles Hodge, D.D., vol. I. pp. 115, 123.

CHAPTER XV.

UNIVERSAL CONSENT ILLUSTRATED BY THE
ANALOGY OF NATURE.

OUR search among single persons, and among bodies of men for an organ of the Holy Ghost, through whom the Lord Jesus, as Head of His Church, makes infallible announcement of His revealed truth is, terminated. We have discovered that no individual mind dare put its teachings or decrees to St. Augustine's test : *Secure judicat orbis terrarum*. Even the Roman Pontiff dare not, without first unchurching a good part of Western Catholic Christendom, and conveniently forgetting the Holy Eastern Church. We have seen that the very alienations which divide so many Christian people into opposing sects testify that each sundered community holds something not in common with the others, which it regards so essential as to justify the separation. The uncertainty verging toward general scepticism, consequent upon individualism, reveals the impossibility of finding truth by solitary searches. We have seen that no council, synod, or other assemblage is able to present valid evidence that it has been breathed upon by the Holy Ghost, so as to become in itself an adequate authority in the delivery of dogma to the Church. The final result of the induction is that such a man—such an order of men—does not exist, and that we must seek elsewhere in order to identify the present and permanent exercise by our Lord of that prophetic function which inheres in Him as the Teacher sent from God.

We return with renewed confidence to the proposition that the only adequate subject of His supernatural instruction is that Body which is the only supernatural organism in the world, and that, because it is the only adequate subject of His instruction, it must be the only competent organ whereby the dogma of His instruction may be expressed and announced. This is His Mystical Body, the Church, dispersed throughout the world, and one in the purview of the Holy Spirit, holding one Lord, one Faith, and one Baptism, speaking in tones that represent His authority the absolute and irreformable truth of God which we are under sacred obligation to believe.

It is at this point practicable to turn aside to the order of nature and find an analogy which may serve to strengthen the confidence of the doubting Christian in his acceptance of the principle of universal consent as the criterion of truth. This mode of the Spirit's contact with the corporate Christian consciousness rests solely on the chosen purpose and covenant engagement of Him Who established the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, and it has been verified in the actual history of the Church in its own supernatural way. But the Head of the Church is He by Whom all things consist and it would be surprising should we fail to discover some traits of resemblance in the two spheres. This principle of the authority of universal judgments is certainly recognizable in the natural world. It was Hesiod who closed his "Works and Days" with the lines :

" The word proclaimed by the concordant voice
Of mankind fails not ; for in man speaks God."

And Cicero said : " that opinion respecting which there is a general agreement in universal nature must infallibly be true ; therefore it must be allowed that there are gods,

for in this we have the concurrence not only of almost all philosophers but likewise of the ignorant and illiterate.”¹

The argument *e consensu gentium* is a favorite one in natural theology. The English Deists of the last century were accustomed to employ it and to speak of the *notitiæ communes* of the human mind as divinely implanted, original, and indefeasible. These were the propositions: that there is one Supreme God, that He is to be worshiped, that worship consists chiefly of virtue and piety, that we must repent of our sins and cease from them, and that there are rewards and punishments in a future life.² Sir John Davies, a poet of the sixteenth century, wrote concerning the immortality of the soul:

“ But how can that be false which every tongue
Of every mortal man affirms for true?
Which truth has in all ages stood so strong
That, loadstone-like, all hearts it ever drew.”

In his dissertation on the philosophy of Common Sense,³ Sir William Hamilton enumerated one hundred and six writers in ancient and modern times who have recognized the authority of universal beliefs. Moehler, with a warmer religious insight, shows that when our Lord constituted the community of believers as his permanent organ, He had recourse to no other law than that which prevails in every department of human life. He shows how the national spirit is expressed in every general act of a nation. “It is as it were the tutelary genius, the guiding

¹ De Natura Deorum, lib. i. xvii. So also Seneca, Epist. cvii. cxvii. “Multum dare solemus praesumptioni omnium hominum. Apud nos veritatis argumentum est aliquid omnibus videri.”

² “These truths, though often clouded, are found in all religions—their universal prevalence being, along with their immediacy, an unmistakable mark of their verity.”—Encycl. Brit. *sub voce* “Deism.”

³ “Dissertations on the Works of Reid,” pp. 770–803.

spirit transmitted from its progenitors, the vivifying breath of the whole community ; and, indeed, the nations-anterior to Christianity personified this their peculiar character, revered it as their national divinity, deduced from it their civil laws and customs, and placed all things under its protection.”¹

This power of the general sentiment is independent of the individual, while every individual may contribute to and be controlled by it. A dissenting voice may speak but it jars upon the sensitive patriotism of the multitude, and its discord is drowned in the thunder of their acclamations. Equally strong in modern nations as in ancient is this national spirit, this devotion to ideas and things that are the revered possession of the commonalty. The waving of a piece of bunting will kindle the enthusiasm of a people to white heat. A word which crystallized thoughts of ages gone is a rallying cry to millions. To defend a national idea, which has the halo of a “*semper, ubique, et ab omnibus*,” around it, great armies will spring to their banners at the alarum of a trumpet. In like manner the ordinary experience of mankind extending through long tracts of time leads to a perception of the truth of certain sequences or other relations of things, which expressed in a sententious form, become a people’s maxims and proverbs. These are accepted by each as the opinion of the whole, and become a kind of creed to govern life and lessen the ills and sorrows of humanity. The child amusing himself with a brazen toy, and the astonished husbandman who finds a deposit of pyrites upon his farm, will hear and profit by the proverb, “All that glitters is not gold.” The influence of this law of the reliability of universal perceptions is thus seen to penetrate the entire natural life of society, and their formularies are found to be

¹ John Adam Moehler, D.D.,—“Symbolism,” p. 274.

respected with spontaneity, and not always because they represent self-evident facts or truths. What ministers to their enforcement is the consciousness that there exists an adequate authority behind them, which has announced the obligation to accept them. The weight and dignity of the national spirit, the wisdom of ages compressed in a sentence, the irresistible force of the common opinion, the idea which no one consciously originated but which seemed to flash like an inspiration into thousands of minds in an instant, is found to constitute an authority to which men willingly bow without protest, dissent, or fear of being deceived.

That which, in the order of nature, is a strong probability, associated with a suggestion of uncertainty, becomes, however, an infallible certainty in the order of supernatural grace. The ordinary perceptions of the universal mind, in their natural play and development, are wonderfully true to truth, but in the realm of revealed truth they have the added gift of a superintending Divine Power Whose specific function it is, in relation to this very truth, to take of the things that pertain to this higher sphere and show them unto the Church. There is here no element of uncertainty whatever. The Lord Christ has instituted this method of delivery the better to impress His teachings upon the mind of man with infallible accuracy. The Church has her spirit, her Catholic genius, her own ways and words, her own peculiar institutes. These are nothing less than the heritage of a divinely controlled past. She has her Body of Dogma—an ecumenical faith. It is her faith because it is in accordance with the ecumenical mind. But we do not pause here, as in the order of nature. We press on under Pentecostal light to discover that it is the mind of the Church, because it is the mind of the Spirit, and, a step further on, that it is the mind of the Spirit,

because whatsoever the Spirit heareth that He speaketh, for, said the Head of the Church, He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you. This is the voice whose least command is law supreme to the Christian. It represents the ultimate authority in the realm of truth. It disperses the shadows of doubt and restores noon-light and faith to the vexed soul.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER.

WE have thus reached the conclusion of the matter. Our Lord Jesus Christ, seated in the *Cathedra* of His mediatorial sovereignty, clothed with supreme authority, has made the truth infallibly known to His Mystical Body by the impact of the Divine Spirit upon the human spirit, producing "a peculiar Christian tact, a deep sure-guiding feeling, which, as it abideth in truth, leads also into all truth."¹ This is what we have ventured to designate the *Ecumenical Mind*—the Church's mind—which perceives, thinks, feels, embraces, and holds one inerrable and irreformable system of dogmatic truth, corresponding with which, and expressive of it, is the *Ecumenical Faith*, containing the essential elements of Christian truth and order, and ascertained by the *communis consensus* of the Church. It was this deep interior faculty of identifying the heavenly wisdom which from the first recognized *implicité* and in due time *explicité* all necessary truth ; discerned in the baptismal formula commanded by our Lord the basis of all subsequent symbolism ; approved, and continued throughout all ages to approve, the Apostles's doctrine and fellowship ; perceived and received the earliest forms of sound words ; ratified the results of that slow process of accretion by which the rule of faith grew into more distinct proportions ; condemned the vagaries of uncatholic teaching ; sifted out

¹ Mochler, "Symbolism," p. 271.

the canon of Scripture from the body of early Christian literature ; rejected the teeming novelties of opinion and the subtle assaults of philosophy which sought to supplant what had been held from the beginning ; and gave authority under Christ to that fixed body of dogmatic truth in which men may trust as in God. It was this verifying sense which, putting the seal of ecumenicity upon the truths which were delivered by an oral ministration, and committed to the Church under the subsequent guidance of a written record, enshrined them, compactly and intelligibly, in the Catholic Creeds. It was this same *common sense* which recognized the legitimacy of no other principle by which to interpret the meaning of the Creeds than that of reference to the actual belief or practice or use of the whole Church. That which was universal was true and to be respected and maintained. The universality of Episcopacy, for instance, was fact interpreting the doctrine of the Church. The universality of infant baptism was the Church's use interpreting the doctrine of baptism for the remission of sin. To keep holy the Lord's Day was, by the custom of the whole Church, made apparent as a part of the Faith. It was this inward instinct which survived the most seductive temptations of error, refusing to be charmed into apostasy because discerning the notes of discord which, however ingeniously mingled with the strains of truth, jarred upon the delicate ear to which the Holy Ghost was wont to speak ; and so won back to the pure music of the Catholic Faith those who, whether in groups or multitudes, were for a time drawn away to listen to the jangled tones of heresy. It is this voice of the whole Church, speaking with distinct, uniform, and untremulous tone the One Faith containing all things necessary to salvation, which rebukes those truth-seekers who still go out after the variable voices that fill the world with

their confused jargon. It was this profound instinct, informed in the Church by the Holy Spirit, which enabled her to perceive the developed doctrines of the Nicene age, not as new truths, but as fuller statements by interpretation of old truths misunderstood, or by defense of old truths antagonized. No other power of development can be conceived, except upon the hypothesis of an unfinished revelation, which would involve the implication that the Church did not at first possess all things necessary to salvation, whereas the original *depositum* was all-sufficient.¹ St. Vincent of Lerins happily illustrates the distinction between the idea of increase and that of change. "This is the nature of an increase, that in themselves severally things grow greater; but of a change that something be turned from one thing which it was to another thing which it was not." Here is in part his illustration: "Let the religion of our souls imitate the nature of our bodies, which, although with process of time they develop and unfold their proportions, yet they remain the same that they were. There is a great difference between the flower of youth and the ripeness of age, yet the self-same men became old which before were young; so that although the state and condition of one and the self-same man be

¹ "Whatever more may be needful in order to identify, guard, vindicate, save from misconstruction, combine, apply [Apostolical] doctrine, nothing further can possibly be needed in the way of new doctrine. The faith once delivered to the saints, as it saved them, so would undoubtedly suffice to save all mankind, even to the day of judgment. No new objects of worship, no new principles of duty, no new exhibitions of truth, can be conceived to be introduced afterwards, except on one of two equally inadmissible hypotheses—the imperfection of the explicit faith of the churches founded by the Apostles, or the design of God, by further revelation, to make the Christian system not final."—Moberley, "The Great Forty Days." Pref. to second edition, p. xli.

altered, yet one and the self-same nature, one and the self-same person, doth still remain.”¹ It was the Holy Spirit in union with the ecumenical mind Who accomplished the early development. It is this same capacity of responding perceptively to the teachings of the Spirit which renders the Church perpetually competent by the same Spirit to further define truths that have been revealed, but are not explicitly necessary to salvation—subject to the delays and impediments which human frailties impose, and conformable to that law of stately deliberation which Almighty God, Who is patient because eternal, has illustrated in all preceding dispensations, and observes in this; yet is not slack as some men count slackness. Delay may be the penalty which He inflicts upon an externally divided Church,² but as the ages go on more light will shine out from above upon the old truths; the Holy Spirit will bring His co-operating power to bear upon this underlying corporate faculty of discernment; some voice, that of a doctor of the Church, of an humble but holy thinker, hid away in retiracy, of a local synod, or it may be of a truly ecumenical council, gladdening the hearts of men and angels with its reappearance after ages of cruel anathemas and separation—some voice will utter the happy definition; and, finally, the consentient Church will perceive it, and adopt into the sacred fellowship of Catholic Dogmas the word that shall express the larger insight she has gained into the profound depths of ancient truth.

But no essential truth will be added. Necessary dogmas are, in the nature of the case, few, and these are stated and set forth in the creeds, as held and illustrated by the Catholic Church. They are not necessary, because they

¹ Commonitorium I. xxiii.

² Bishop Forbes on the XXXIX. Articles, p. 284.

are in the creeds, but they are in the creeds because they are necessary. They were held and believed before they were enshrined in these symbols—*i. e.*, from the first. The creeds teach us, by inclusion, what are the necessary factors of Catholic Dogma, and hence, by exclusion, what are non-essential. Nothing can be formally *de fide* which the Holy Ghost, the Vicar of Christ, does not teach to the Church, and which the Church does not perceive and formulate. For this reason, he who finds in universality of acceptance a simple, substantial and all-sufficient basis of certitude, on which even doubt may rest as on the adamant stone, will repudiate the right of any individual, crowned, or mitred, or masterly in theology, or of any order or assemblage of men, to establish as a term of Catholic communion opinions or speculations of individual origin and limited acceptance, systematized statements of doctrine based upon some private philosophical view of religion, widely held but not universally received inferences from Catholic Dogma—views which are claimed to constitute the peculiarity of any special sect of people without, or coterie or party within, the Church—obscure ideas in Holy Scripture upon which there has not prevailed any consensus of interpretation, facts and ordinances which, while religious in their character, lack divinely-ordered connection with the rise and development of the kingdom of heaven. Nothing which lacks the *placet* of the ecumenical mind can be a matter of necessary faith; and this remark will apply to all formularies whatsoever, whether of local or general acceptance; and, when applied to the Catholic creeds themselves, it solves every problem—*e. g.*, the problem of the *Filioque*—for it expurgates them of every syllable which does not rest upon the common consent of Christendom. This remark will apply also to all questions of interpretation, and to

all uses, instruments and institutes which pertain to the Church.

There has ever been manifested a perverse ambition to go before the Holy Spirit and enlarge the sanctuary of truth, so as to include within it what the Church, either by affirmation or denial, has excluded. This sinful folly has resulted in the strifes that have torn the seamless robe of Christ, the logomachies that have borne the bitter fruit of schism, the contentions that deafen the ear of the age. What Bishop Jeremy Taylor said in his "*Liberty of Prophesying*" concerning a disputed question, will apply generally—"Either it is not revealed, or not so clearly but that wise and honest men may be of different minds, or else it is not of the foundation of the faith but a remote superstructure, or else mere speculation; or perhaps, when all comes to all, it is a false opinion or a matter of human interest that we have so zealously contended for; for to one of these heads most of the disputes of Christendom may be reduced. So that I believe the present fractions, or the most, are from the same cause which St. Paul observed in the Corinthian schism, 'when there are divisions among you, are ye not carnal?'"¹ Why, then, should men rend each other over questions which they cannot settle? Will there never dawn an irenic age in which Ephraim and Manasseh shall no longer vex each other? Surely, the Church ought to perceive that her divisions have been caused by strife concerning questions of subsidiary importance. The parties that exist within her pale find occa-

¹ The "golden-mouthed" Bishop in this book, as well as in his *Doc-tor Dubitantium*, did not incline to the authority of universal judgments, but in a later utterance he announces a complete change of opinion. Bishop Jebb wrote of him that "he had seen, felt and weighed every difficulty; the result of all was a deliberate persuasion that Vincentius was right, and that he himself was wrong."

sion of quarrel only when they take up questions which, so far as the mind of the Spirit has been revealed, do not involve the essence of our religion. A millennium of controversy, with regard to the mode of union which subsists between the outward and the inward parts of the Lord's Supper, has been wasted upon a question which, like the mode of psychological contact which governs the Holy Spirit in His communication with the human spirit, our Lord may not purpose to reveal to the Church. Although the question does not emerge in the creeds, there is undoubtedly a *communis consensus* as to the *fact* of the union; but when we think of the *modus*, while we may reverently meditate, we have no right to dogmatize, nor has any teacher the authority to enforce his opinions as the mind of the Spirit.¹

It were a usurpation of the awful functions of the Holy Ghost to seek to elevate a statement of mere opinion concerning any subject to the dignity of a dogma, whether it be done by a layman or a clergyman, a synod, a council, or any other body of men. Forgetful of all this, contending theologians have been guilty of this sin, and have inflicted upon the Church and the world the consequent curse of separatism. It is this wearying strife of tongues which causes doubt to spring up in many minds who would gladly escape the apparent alternative. But the doubter should consider that the smoke and dust of this

¹ Keble, speaking in his "Letters of Spiritual Counsel," p. 212, of the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist as not having been a subject of ecumenical enactment, says: "Well, therefore, may each person, or each portion of the Church, for himself or itself, form strong opinions, and express them strongly, as God shall guide them, on the several points involved in the doctrine; but to impose them as Articles of Faith, making those heretics who demur to them, they are not, I conceive, competent, except the point be such an one as can be shown to have been *unequivocally* received by the whole Church from the beginning; such (*e. g.*) as the inspiration of Holy Scripture."

perpetual controversy do not reach those calm altitudes where the dogmatic faith serenely abides, receiving the Spirit-taught allegiance of the whole Church. That only is the ecumenical faith which enjoys the certification of the ecumenical mind. On that rock let the doubting mind and weary heart rest. It represents the dogmatic unity of all the legitimate branches of the Church. Above their diversities, grave as they are, rises that Catholic Faith, tenaciously held by each, professed in perfect unison by all.

It must needs be that offences come. The perfection of that heaven-born order whereby different members are designed to work in harmony comes into contact with human freedom and imperfection. Tides of evil surge up within and rush in from without. The eye begins to say to the hand, I have no need of thee, and the head to the feet, I have no need of you.¹ By the alchemy of human perversity, varieties are transmuted into contrarieties. The very truths which naturally tend to create and conserve unity in the Church, thus become occasions of debilitating controversy. The consequences are inevitable—heresy, and what St. Paul terms “schism in the body.” These conditions must be accepted as incident to a disordered world and an imperfect nature. There is often a malignity of self-will in men which will not permit them to surrender even to the “majestic evidence” furnished by a consensus of humanity. But it is well to remember how there is in God a prerogative to make the wrath of man to praise Him. Doubt has its holy mission if it lead to the presence of the Lord where “spectres of the mind” dare not appear, and in that presence to a stronger faith and nobler life. Heresy has desolated many a fair and blooming field, but it has also been overruled for good. Apostasy has turned to

¹ 1. Cor. xii.

bless when it meant to curse. The bloody band of persecution, seeking to obliterate the faith by destroying its literature, led the Church to gather up the sacred writings, and crystallize them into canonical shape. Scarcely a dogma of the faith, always the faith of the Church, but has been reasserted and brought out into fuller form and splendor in the course of controversy.

Thus the external powers of evil have always seemed to conspire with moral deficiencies in the Church, to supply a gloomy background upon which, as on a tempestuous sky, the Holy Ghost has cast His bow of seven-hued beauty, and written there, in forms of ineffable splendor the legends of universal truth, the token and reality of His covenant Who said : "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He shall guide you into all truth."

In prosecuting this inquiry in regard to a substantial basis of certitude upon which faith may rest in undisturbed confidence, "like summer seas unvexed with storm," we have contemplated chiefly the difficulties of those who are under the influence of that incipient form of scepticism termed doubt, but who still maintain outward allegiance to the faith, and earnestly desire to be freed from the debilitating influence of their doubts. There are few among those who strongly believe who do not have reason to sympathize with these perplexed and anxious souls, whose faith, once aglow and radiant, is now a taper trembling in the tempest. They are more numerous than some like to confess, but for the most part they resist the tendency of their minds and take up arms against their doubt, having no pleasure in them, feeling in their souls that even as a conviction surrendered religion would still include the noblest things in life ; nor willing to let go all without manfully struggling to regain full-orbed faith. Their emotions are expressed in the familiar lines :

“I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the world’s great altar-stairs,
That slope through darkness up to God,

“I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.”¹

For those who have not forsworn their allegiance to JESUS as the central figure in the realm of truth and the master of their souls, we have sought to show that there is in Him the beginning of a pathway that will lead them to the Catholic Faith as a basis of explicit certitude. In this they may hear the very accents of that Voice which once on earth spake “as one having authority.” Unwilling doubt will do more than “faintly trust” when the Lord Christ speaks. It will merge its tremors in the larger strength of an assurance such as that which St. Paul possessed, and say “I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” A faith which is thus emancipated from doubt and restored to robust vigor will be equipped as never before to withstand other assaults. Equally in communities as in individuals the reaction from doubt stimulates the capacity for believing, and ushers in an age of faith. In the confidence that such a day is approaching, let us who doubt, and us who believe, fervently pray—

Almighty and ever-living God, Who, for the greater confirmation of the faith, didst suffer Thy holy Apostle Thomas to be doubtful in Thy Son’s resurrection; grant

¹ Tennyson, “In Memoriam,” LIV.

us so perfectly, and without all doubt, to believe in Thy Son Jesus Christ, that our faith in Thy sight may never be reprov'd. Hear us, O Lord, through the same Jesus Christ, to Whom, with Thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, now and forevermore. *Amen.*



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